NATION

Demolitions strike fear in Bahraich shopkeepers

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

FM invites Mexican firms to explore opportunities in India

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

India fold up for 462, set NZ 107 to win on final day

≫ Page: 8 ≪

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 20 OCTOBER 2024 | SUNDAY | BENGALURU | 16 RABI UL SANI, 1446 AH | Vol 4 | Issue No 265 | Pages: 8

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Health, life insurance likely to be exempt from GST

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

Term life insurance policies, and senior citizens' health insurance premium are likely to be exempted from GST as most members of a state ministerial panel favoured cutting taxes to benefit the common man, an official said on Saturday.

The GoM to decide on GST on health and life insurance premiums in its meeting on Saturday decided to exempt GST on premiums paid by individuals, other than senior citizens, for health insurance with coverage of up to Rs 5 lakh. However, 18 per cent GST will continue to be levied for health insurance cover of over Rs 5 lakh.

Separately, the GoM on GST rate rationalisation, too, met on Saturday and suggested that the GST Council rejig tax rates on a host of goods, including packaged drinking water, bicycles, exercise notebooks, luxury wrist watches, and shoes.

A final decision on GST on health and life insurance premiums, as well as rate rationalisation, is likely to the taken by the GST Council, chaired by Union Finance Minister and comprising state counterparts, in its meeting scheduled to take place next month.

"The rate rejig exercise will help the states and Centre to realise revenue gain of Rs 22,000 crore, which will help cover the revenue loss from reduction in GST rates for insurance premiums," the official added.

The GoM on rate rationalisation proposed reducing GST on packaged drinking water of 20 litre and above to 5 per cent from 18 per cent. If the GoM's recommendation is accepted by the GST council, GST on bicycles costing less than Rs 10,000 will be reduced to 5 per cent from 12 per cent.

Also, GST on exercise notebooks will be reduced to 5 per cent from 12 per cent. The GoM also proposed hiking GST on shoes above Rs 15,000/pair from 18 per cent to 28 per cent. It also proposed hiking GST on wrist watches above Rs 25,000 from 18 per cent to 28 per cent.

The panel will meet again before submitting its report to the Council. This was the first meeting of the 13-member GoM health and life insurance premiums, which was set up to last month to suggest tax rates. —*PTI*

The GoM on rate rationalisation proposed reducing GST on packaged drinking water of 20 litre ***PHOTO: PTI***

In just 24 hours, 30 flights get hoax bomb threats

After 70 bomb threats in 6 days, govt holds meet with airlines

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

More than 30 flights of various Indian airlines, including Vistara, Air India and IndiGo, received bomb threats on Saturday, according to sources.

Flights of Air India, IndiGo, Akasa Air, Vistara, SpiceJet, Star Air and Alliance Air have received the threats, the sources said.

So far this week, at least 70 flights of Indian carriers have received bomb threats and most of them turned out to be hoaxes.

Meanwhile, the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) officials held a meeting with representatives of airlines, according to sources. Some airlines were represented by their CEOs and others by their senior officials at the meeting.

"Indian skies are absolutely safe. The current protocol (to deal with the situation) is robust and is being strictly followed. We reassure passengers that they should fly without any fear," BCAS Director General Zulfiquar Hasan said.

In at least one of the flights, a note was found in the lavatory saying there was a bomb in the flight.

On Saturday, Vistara said five of its flights on international routes received security threats through social media while IndiGo said at least four of its flights got security-related alerts. The five flights of Vistara are UK106 (Singapore to Mumbai), UK027 (Mumbai to Frankfurt), UK107 (Mumbai to Singapore), UK121 (Delhi to Bangkok) and UK131 (Mumbai to Colombo).

Besides, there was a security concern regarding Vistara flight UK624 from Udaipur to Mumbai, and after landing, the aircraft was taken to an isolation bay for mandatory checks.

IndiGo issued statements for at least four flights with respect to the threats. They are 6E17 (Mumbai to Istanbul), 6E11 (Delhi to Istanbul), 6E184 (Jodhpur to Delhi) and 6E108 (Hyderabad to Chandigarh).

The airline said it is cognisant of a situation involving flights from Mumbai and Delhi to Istanbul.

On Friday, three international flights of Vistara received bomb threats which turned out to be hoaxes and one of the flights was diverted to Frankfurt as a precautionary measure.

In the past few days, more than 40 flights operated by the Indian carriers have received bomb threats which later turned out to be hoaxes. An Alliance Air Kochi-Bengaluru flight was among the over 30 flights that received bomb threats on Saturday, according to the Cochin International Airport Ltd. —*PTI*

The bomb hoaxes have caused inconveniences for flyers ***PHOTO: PTI***

After Sinwar's killing, drone targets Israel PM's house

JERUSALEM, 19 OCT

Israel's government said a drone targeted Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's house Saturday, with no casualties, as fighting with Lebanon-based Hezbollah and Gaza-based Hamas showed no pause after the killing of the mastermind of last year's deadly 7 October attack.

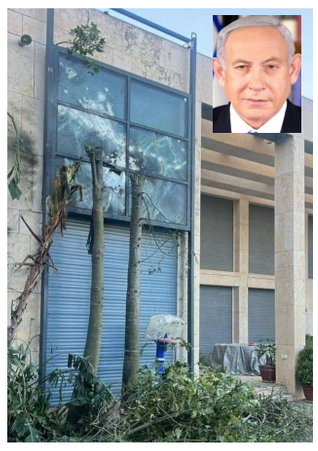
Israel's military said dozens of projectiles were launched from Lebanon, as sirens wailed. Netanyahu's office said the drone targeted his house in the Mediterranean coastal town of Caesarea, though neither he nor his wife were there.

Hezbollah did not claim responsibility for the drone attack but said it carried out several rocket attacks on northern and central Israel.

Israel in turn carried out at least three airstrikes on Beirut's southern suburbs known as Dahiyeh, a heavily populated area home to Hezbollah's offices.

In Gaza, Israeli forces fired at hospitals in the battered north of the Palestinian enclave, and strikes killed more than 50 people, including children, in less than 24 hours, according to hospital officials and an Associated Press reporter there. "The possibility of war in the region remains a serious concern," Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said while visiting Turkey.Lebanon's state-run National News Agency said an Israeli airstrike on an apartment in Baaloul village in the east killed five people, including the mayor of a nearby village, Sohmor. —*PTI*

>>>More on Pages 5 & 6



PM Benjamin Netanyahu's office said the drone targeted his house in Caesarea ***PHOTO: SCREENGRAB***

Hearing on Gyanvapi ends, verdict on 25 Oct

VARANASI, 19 OCT

The verdict on the Varanasi Gyanvapi mosque is to be pronounced on 25 October as the debate in the 33-year-old case has been completed. This case of Lord Visheshwar vs. Anjuman Intezamiya Masjid Committee has been going on since 1991. The Hindu side had sought permission to give the right to worship and build a temple within the Gyanvapi premises. The arguments from the Muslim side have been completed in the 1991 case concerning the Gyanvapi complex in Varanasi. The case was filed regarding the construction of a new temple in Gyanvapi and granting Hindus the right to worship. —***ANI***

Question people only during office hrs: ED to officers

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

Enforcement Directorate issued a fresh circular directing its officials or investigating officers (IOs) to not question people called on summons at "unearthly" hours and not keep them waiting for hours at their office. The circular was issued on 11 October after the Bombay High Court directed the federal agency to issue directives in this context as it took up the petition of a person who was summoned by the ED and "detained overnight and interrogated." The court found that the 64-year-old petitioner was summoned to ED office for questioning and was kept waiting post midnight.—***PTI***

Cyclonic circulation intensifies over Andaman

BHUBANESWAR, 19 OCT

India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Saturday said that a cyclonic circulation has formed over Andaman sea which is likely to intensify into a low pressure by 21 October. The low pressure may have an impact on coastal areas of north Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, West Bengal and Bangladesh next week. The IMD forecast said that light to moderate rain/thundershower very likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of south Odisha, north coastal Odisha and dry weather very likely to prevail over the districts of north interior Odisha. IMD also forecast thunderstorm to occur at isolated places in Puri and Khurda. —***PTI***

BJP fields Bommai's son for Shiggaon bypolls

BENGALURU, 19 OCT

BJP on Saturday announced former Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai's son as its candidate for Shiggaon bypoll and fielding the party's ST Morcha President Bangaru Hanumanthu from Sandur Assembly.

The announcement of Bharath Bommai's candidature marks the entry of third generation of Bommai family into electoral politics.

His grandfather SR Bommai and father Basavaraj Bommai were former chief ministers.

Basavaraj is now a BJP MP from Haveri Lok Sabha segment.

Meanwhile, BJP-JD(S) alliance is yet to announce the name of the candidate for Channapatna.In its most likelihood, the ticket would be reserved for JD(S).

According to sources, chances are high that Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy's son Nikhil Kumaraswamy may be fielded from Channapatna. Congress has not yet announced its candidates, though party sources said Pathan Ahmed Khan, who was defeated by Basavaraj in 2023 Assembly election may be fielded again from Shiggaon.

In Sandur, Congress MP E Tukaram's wife or daughter may be given the ticket, they said. Regarding Channapatna, they claimed that Deputy Chief Minister and Congress state president DK Shivakumar's brother DK Suresh may get the ticket.

BJP names candidates for LS bypoll

BJP on Saturday fielded Navya Haridas from Kerala's Wayanad Lok Sabha constituency, where Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is contesting on a Congress ticket. The party also named 24 candidates for Assembly polls across eight states. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

Champai, Marandi star in BJP 1st list

RANCHI/NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

BJP on Saturday released its first list of 66 candidates for the Jharkhand Assembly elections, fielding party president Babulal Marandi from Dhanwar and former chief minister Champai Soren from Saraikela.

The party named Sita Soren, the sister-in-law of JMM leader and Chief Minister Hemant Soren, as its nominee from Jamtara.

The list also has the names of Geeta Kora and former Union minister Sudarshan Bhagat.

Assembly polls will be held in two phases on 13 and 20 November and counting will take place on November 23.

BJP is contesting 68 of the 81 Assembly seats in the state, leaving the rest for its allies.

Former Jharkhand chief minister and BJP state president Babulal Marandi won Dhanwar seat in Giridih in 2019 by a margin of 17,550 votes on a Jharkhand Vikas Morcha (Prajatantrik) ticket against his nearest rival Lakshman Prasad Singh of the BJP.

Champai Soren, who contested from Seraikela, joined BJP on 30 August, two days after he resigned from the JMM citing "insult" and dissatisfaction with the party's current style of functioning and facing "bitter humiliation". —*PTI*

Cong & JMM ally for 70 of 81 seats

RANCHI, 19 OCT

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Saturday said that the INDIA bloc partners will contest the Assembly polls together and Congress and JMM will field candidates in 70 of 81 seats.

Seat-sharing talks are on with alliance partners - RJD and the Left parties - for the remaining 11 seats, he said. The Assembly polls for 81 seats will be held in two phases on 13 and 20 November, and counting will take place on 23 November. Soren said the decision was taken after consultations with allies and candidates would be announced soon.

NDA on Friday announced its seat-sharing formula among its partners. BJP will contest 68 seats, AJSU Party 10, JD(U) 2 and LJP (Ram Vilas) 1. Filing of nomination papers for 43 Assembly constituencies of Jharkhand, which are going to polls on 13 November in the first phase, began on Friday and will continue till 25 October.

In 2019, JMM-led alliance won 47 seats in the Jharkhand Assembly, including 30 of JMM and 16 of Congress. BJP had secured 25 seats, JVM-P 3, AJSU Party 2, CPI-ML 1, NCP- 1 and independents 2. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

ED continues raids at MUDA office for 2nd day

MYSURU, 19 OCT

The Directorate of Enforcement (ED) continued raids at the MUDA office for the second consecutive day on Saturday in the alleged corruption in the allotment of 14 sites to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi in Mysuru.

After an 11-hour break, ED officials resumed their investigation on Saturday at MUDA office. The team had spent 12 hours verifying land records on Friday before leaving at 11.45pm.

Arriving at 10am on Saturday, ED officials continued their inquiry, joined by MUDA Commissioner Raghunandan. They also visited the residence of landowner A Devaraju, where they recorded his statement related to the ongoing investigation.

A three-member ED team that had raided the Taluk office on Friday focused on collecting land allotment details concerning BM Parvathi, the Chief Minister's wife, specifically for a disputed land parcel in Kesare village. —*Salar News*

>>>More on Page 2

PHOTO: PTI

AHEAD OF POLLS

Jalna: Gauri Lankesh's murder accused joins Shinde-led Sena

JALNA, 19 OCT

Shrikant Pangarkar, an accused in the 2017 murder of journalist Gauri Lankesh, which outraged the nation, joined Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena in Jalna ahead of Assembly polls.

Lankesh was shot dead outside her home in Karnataka capital Bengaluru on September 5, 2017.

A probe by police in Karnataka with assistance from agencies in Maharashtra led to the arrest of several persons. Pangarkar, a Jalna municipal councillor of the undivided Shiv Sena between 2001and 2006, was arrested in August 2018 and was granted bail by the High Court on 4 September this year.

After he was denied a ticket by the Shiv Sena in 2011, Pangarkar joined the Right-wing Hindu Janjagruti Samiti.

He has been nominated as the chief of the Jalna Assembly poll campaign.

Khotkar also said he wants to contest the Assembly poll from Jalna, but added seat sharing discussions in the Mahayuti were still underway. —*PTI*

Shrikant Pangarkar ***PHOTO: PTI***

2 JAWANS KILLED IN CHHATTISGARH IED BLAST

NARAYANPUR, 19 OCT

Two personnel of Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) were killed and two policemen injured on Saturday when Naxalites carried out an improvised explosive device (IED) blast in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur district, police said.

The incident occurred around 12 noon in Kodliyar forest in the Abujhmaad area when joint teams of security personnel were out on an anti-Naxal operation, Inspector General of Police (Bastar Range) Sundarraj said. —*PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Former CM SM Krishna hospitalised

BENGALURU, 19 OCT

Former chief minister S M Krishna was admitted to a private hospital on Saturday. The hospital sources confirmed Krishna's admission, but they did not disclose what he was suffering from. Krishna, 92, also served as the External Affairs minister during the Manmohan Singh-led United Progressive Alliance government from 2009 to 2012. In August, he was admitted to the hospital with respiratory problems. *—PTI*

Bengaluru to commemorate police martyrs

BENGALURU, 19 OCT

To honour the brave police personnel who have lost their lives in the line of duty, Bengaluru will mark Police Commemoration Day on Monday at Mayrs Garden, CAR Headquarters, Mysuru Road. The event will be graced by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah as the chief guest, accompanied by Home Minister DR G Parameshwara. The ceremony will commence at 7.55am with the arrival of the chief guest, followed by a general salute at 8am. Police officers and officials will lay wreaths to pay tribute to the martyrs. *—Salar News*

Mysuru police crackdown on illegal activities

MYSURU, 19 OCT

In a series of successful operations, Mysuru police apprehended individuals involved in illegal activities across the city. City Crime Branch (CCB) and Alanahally police jointly conducted a raid on a building located on Alanahally's main road on Thursday, resulting in the arrest of 12 people for gambling. The police seized Rs 70.390 thousand in cash and other materials used for the game. A case has been registered at Alanahally Police Station, and further investigations are underway. In another operation, CCB police seized 35g of MDMA drugs worth Rs 1.05 lakh and arrested a man involved in the drug trade. The raid was conducted at Gomala land near Byraveshwara school in Mahadeshwara layout, falling under the jurisdiction of Vijayanagar Police Station. The City Police Commissioner stated in a release that the raid was based on a tip-off. Vijayanagar police have registered a case and are investigating the matter. Furthermore, Metagalli Police have arrested a person in the theft of three passenger autorickshaws worth Rs 2.60 lakh. The accused was apprehended during routine police patrolling on 15 October night near Royal Inn Junction on the outer ring road. *—Salar News*

Day 2: ED continues raids at MUDA office

Revenue records of land at the centre of scam belonged to CM's wife, finds ED during raids

MYSURU, 19 OCT

The Directorate of Enforcement (ED) continued raids at the MUDA office for the second consecutive day on Saturday in the alleged corruption in the allotment of 14 sites to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi in Mysuru.

After an 11-hour break, ED officials resumed their investigation on Saturday at MUDA office. The team had spent 12 hours verifying land records on Friday before leaving at 11.45pm.

Arriving at 10am on Saturday, ED officials continued their inquiry, joined by MUDA Commissioner Raghunandan. They also visited the residence of landowner A Devaraju, where they recorded his statement related to the ongoing investigation.

A three-member ED team that had raided the Taluk office on Friday focused on collecting land allotment details concerning BM Parvathi, the Chief Minister's wife, specifically for a disputed land parcel in Kesare village, measuring approximately 3 acres and 16 guntas. ED discovered that the revenue records for this land still list BM Parvathi as the owner.

Mysuru Tahsildar KM Mahesh Kumar, who assisted the ED officers in examining land records dating back to 1935, confirmed, "Parvathi is still the owner of the land, and the Record of Rights, Tenancy and Crops (RTC) remains in her name according to the records."

Meanwhile, G Kumar Naik, a MP from Raichur and former Deputy Commissioner of Mysuru, appeared at the Lokayukta office on Saturday to provide evidence related to the case. As a Congress leader, Naik has faced accusations of alienating the disputed Kesare land during his tenure two decades ago.

Speaking to reporters, Naik explained that he complied with a notice from the Lokayukta to present himself and respond to inquiries. "My investigation lasted about two hours, during which I answered all their questions and shared all the information I had regarding this case," he stated.

The investigation continues as the ED and Lokayukta officials gather evidence in the ongoing money laundering case involving Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

The officials barred outsiders from entering the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) premises.

The Central probe agency officials, with a CRPF security team, have been conducting raids at the MUDA office in Mysuru, its Tehsil office, and the premises of an accused in the case, Devaraju, at Kengeri in Bengaluru since Friday. *—Salar News*

After an 11-hour break, ED officials resumed their investigation on Saturday at MUDA office *PHOTO: PTI*

Yaduveer urges CBI probe into MUDA scam

Mysuru, 19 Oct

BJP MP Yaduveer Wadiyar demanded a CBI investigation into the alleged MUDA scam and called for the resignation of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to ensure a fair and impartial probe.

He stated that his party leaders will meet both the governor and the President of India to demand a CBI probe into the allegations of the Chief Minister's family members' involvement in obtaining 14 sites under the controversial scheme, as well as the Chief Minister's role and the involvement of others in the scam. *—Salar News*

ED should raid Byrathi Suresh's home: BJP MLA

MYSURU, 19 OCT

BJP MLA TS Srivatsa on Saturday called upon Enforcement Directorate (ED) officials to raid the residence and offices of State Urban Development Minister Byrathi Suresh in Bengaluru. Srivatsa believes that these locations may contain crucial files related to the controversial 50:50 scheme, including those involving the Chief Minister's family.

The MLA expressed frustration with the ED's limited access to the relevant files at the MUDA office. He asserted that the Minister likely removed these files after the scam came to light. Srivatsa pointed out that out of the 4,779 sites distributed under the 50:50 scheme, only 14 sites allocated to the Chief Minister's wife have been returned to MUDA. He urged the authorities to reclaim all sites distributed under the scheme from the beneficiaries.

The MLA also criticised the state government's practice of nominating MLAs and MPs as MUDA members, even when they do not reside in Mysuru. He demanded the government to discontinue this practice and allow only genuine residents to serve on the MUDA board.

Furthermore, Srivatsa called for a CBI probe into the matter, as the State Lokayukta Police have failed to take action against Chief Minister Siddaramaiah or his wife, BM Parvathi. *—Salar News*

Byrathi Suresh *PHOTO: FB*

- Srivatsa called for a CBI probe into the matter, as the Lokayukta Police have failed to take action against Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

BENGALUREANS BRAVE RAIN

On Saturday, as rain poured down in Bengaluru, cricket enthusiasts flocked to M Chinnaswamy Stadium to catch the fourth day of India vs New Zealand Test match. Despite the weather, their passion for the game remained undeterred as they sought shelter from rain; A school students walks home amid rains *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

Pralhad's brother held in ₹2cr cheating case

BENGALURU, 19 OCT

The police on Saturday arrested Union Minister Pralhad Joshi's brother based on a cheating complaint lodged by a former JD(S) MLA's wife.

Gopal Joshi and a woman named Vijayalakshmi Joshi were booked by Basaveshwaranagar police on Thursday night. Gopal's son Ajay Joshi has also been named in the FIR.

The complaint was lodged by Sunita Chavan, wife of former Nagthan MLA Devavand Phool Singh Chavan, who lost the 2023 Assembly election.

She alleged that Gopal Joshi duped her of Rs two crore on the pretext of securing her family a BJP ticket to contest the May Lok Sabha elections. The complainant also alleged that Vijayalakshmi was introduced to her as Pralhad Joshi's sister.

However, the union minister of Parliamentary Affairs, Coal and Mines, clarified that he had no sister. He said he has only three brothers, one of whom died in a road accident in Maharashtra's Ahmednagar in 1984.

The Minister had already clarified that he disowned his brother (Gopal Joshi) more than three decades ago, and said he had filed an affidavit in the court and also published a public notice saying that anyone claiming to be his brother, relatives or friends and indulging in any financial business will not be a binding on him. *—PTI*

Pralhad Joshi *PHOTO: ANI*

- The Minister had already clarified that he disowned his brother (Gopal Joshi) more than three decades ago, and said he had filed an affidavit in the court and also published a public notice.

YATNAL BOOKED FOR REMARKS AGAINST RAHUL

VIJAYAPURA, 19 OCT

A case has been registered against Vijayapura MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal for allegedly insulting Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during a public meeting held here recently, police said on Saturday.

The case was registered on Friday on a complaint by Congress Municipal councilor Parashuram Hosamani.

In his complaint, Hosamani alleged that at an event on 15 October, Yatnal made derogatory statements against Rahul Gandhi and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. Based on his complaint, a case of intentional insult to provoke a breach of peace and spreading false and misleading information was registered. *—PTI*

Basanagouda Yatnal *PHOTO: FB*

HDK and BSY to meet over bypoll tiff

HUBBALLI, 19 OCT

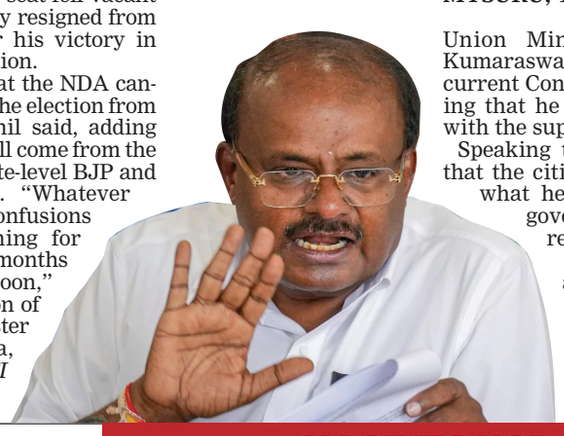
JD(S) leader Nikhil Kumaraswamy on Saturday said his father and Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy will meet former Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa and his son and BJP State President BY Vijayendra to iron out differences regarding Channapatna Assembly bypoll.

He said the JD(S) and BJP leaders will finalise the candidate by Sunday.

A decision has been arrived at that an NDA candidate would contest the Channapatna Assembly bypoll to be held on 13 November, Nikhil told PTI.

The Channapatna seat fell vacant after Kumaraswamy resigned from the Assembly after his victory in the Lok Sabha election.

It is very clear that the NDA candidate will contest the election from Channapatna, Nikhil said, adding that the decision will come from the Central and the state-level BJP and the JD(S) leaders. "Whatever small issues or confusions have been happening for the past couple of months will be set right soon," Nikhil, the grandson of former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda, said. *—PTI*



HDK KEEPS CM AMBITIONS ALIVE

MYSURU, 19 OCT

Union Minister of Steel and Heavy Industries HD Kumaraswamy expressed confidence on Saturday that the current Congress government will not last until 2028, asserting that he envisions himself returning as Chief Minister with the support of the people.

Speaking to reporters in Mandya, Kumaraswamy stated that the citizens of State are increasingly dissatisfied with what he described as a "corruption-ridden" Congress government that is "plundering" the state's natural resources.

While he humorously noted that he is not an astrologer to predict his future, he emphasised that there is a strong possibility of him reclaiming the Chief Minister's office, as people appreciated his governance during his two previous terms. *—Salar News*

'Anganwadi worker in Kolar branded child'

KOLAR, 19 OCT

An Anganwadi worker named Sridevi, employed at the Nidagatta village Anganwadi Kendra in Malur taluk, has been reassigned to a nearby centre in Turugaluru village following allegations of branding a four-year-old female child. The worker however said that it was an accidental incident and she had no intention to harm the child.

The incident, which occurred on 7 October, came to light only recently when local Gram Panchayat members reported the matter to the child development project officials. Upon receiving the complaint, District Program Officer Vamshi Krishna and Child Development Project Officer Malur, Byra Reddy, visited the Anganwadi Kendra to investigate the matter.

A meeting was convened with the parents of the children, elected representatives, department authorities, and other stakeholders.

During the meeting, Sridevi explained that the incident was unintentional and occurred while she was lighting the stove.

A spark is believed to have fallen on the child, causing minor burn injuries. As a result of the investigation, it was decided to transfer Sridevi to another Anganwadi centre in a nearby village. She has been advised to exercise caution in the future. *—Salar News*

Chikkaballapur cops arrest 2 thieves, recover Rs 47L

CHIKKABALLAPUR, 19 OCT

Chikkaballapur police arrested three individuals in connection with a series of daylight robberies, recovering valuables worth over Rs 47.68 lakhs, including more than half a kg of gold valued at over Rs 40 lakhs.

Two notable robberies were reported: one in Kagathi village, Chintamani taluk, on 14 September, and another in Nayanahalli, Chintamani taluk, on 16 September.

The accused are Mahesh, 25, from Hindupura, Andhra Pradesh; Mudhapeer Pasha, 33, from Cottonpet, Bengaluru; and Sulthan Basha, 22 from Chinnasandra village, Chintamani taluk. The team also recovered the stolen valuables and an Indigo car used in the crimes.

In addition to the two recent incidents, the accused are believed to be involved in eight other similar robberies across the State.

In a separate incident, two individuals—Chakali Pavan Kumar, 29, from Turukulapatnam, Sathya Sai district, Andhra Pradesh, and Nagalur Ramanaiah, 47,—were arrested for stealing silver articles from a temple in Dapparathi village, Gudibande taluk, Chikkaballapur district.

Police recovered silver items worth over Rs 1.7 lakh, including the Kavacha and crown of the presiding deity, which were taken during a break-in on 2 October. Authorities have indicated that the suspects are also linked to other crimes occurring in Tumkuru and various parts of the State. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: PTI

CM GIVES NOD

Animal Husbandry, Veterinary Department to fill 700 D Group posts

MYSURU, 19 OCT

State Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Science Minister K Venkatesh stated on Saturday that his Department will soon recruit for 700 vacant D Group posts. The Minister confirmed that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, who also holds the state finance portfolio, has granted the necessary financial approval for these recruitments.

This announcement comes on the heels of the launch of the sixth round of vaccination against foot and mouth disease (FMD) for the State's livestock population. Venkatesh was speaking at a technical seminar for veterinarians organized jointly by the Department of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Sciences and the State Veterinarians Association.

PHOTO: KVAFSU.EDU.IN/

In the past, 400 veterinary doctors were recruited on a contractual basis, and a notification has been issued to fill another 400 positions permanently through the Karnataka Public Service Commission (KPSC).

While several private entities have proposed setting up veterinary colleges, the State government has opted to establish new colleges in Kokatnur, Athani taluk of Belagavi, and Puttur in Dakshina Kannada.

Director of the Department of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Sciences, Dr Manjunath S Paleyagar, said State boasts 4,564 veterinary clinics, serving a population of 5 crore poultry and 3 crore livestock. The state's fifth-rank position in milk production and its proactive approach to FMD vaccination were also mentioned.

The Department planned to administer FMD vaccinations to 98 lakh cattle from 21 October throughout the state. To ensure round-the-clock services to livestock, 275 mobile veterinary clinics have been set up across the State, staffed with 275 doctors. *—Salar News*

- The Department planned to administer FMD vaccinations to 98 lakh cattle from 21 October. To ensure round-the-clock services to livestock, 275 mobile veterinary clinics have been set up across the State.

PHOTO: PTI

Plaint against Odia actor for post against RaGa

BHUBANESWAR, 19 OCT

The National Students' Union of India (NSUI) lodged a police complaint against Odia actor Buddhaditya Mohanty for his controversial social media post about Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. State NSUI president Udit Pradhan filed the complaint at Capital police station on Friday, demanding action against Mohanty for the post, which has now been deleted. "In the social media post, Mohanty said that after killing NCP leader Baba Siddique, gangster Lawrence Bishnoi's next target should be Congress MP Rahul Gandhi. We cannot tolerate such a remark against our leader," said Pradhan. Along with the complaint, he submitted to the police a screenshot of the social media post. Police said they have received the complaint and are enquiring into it. *—PTI*

2 terrorists behind grenade attacks arrested in J&K

POONCH/JAMMU, 19 OCT

Jammu and Kashmir Police on Saturday claimed to have solved several grenade attack cases in Poonch with the arrest of two terrorists of the Jammu and Kashmir Ghaznavi Force (JKGF) in the district. Additional Director General of Police (ADGP), Jammu Zone, Anand Jain said the arrest of Abdul Aziz and Manwar Hussain of Hari village is a "very big achievement" for the security agencies. In a joint operation on Friday, police along with troops of 37 Rashtriya Rifles and 38th Battalion of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) nabbed Aziz and recovered two hand grenades from his possession. During investigation, one more grenade was recovered from his house and his accomplice Hussain was also arrested along with a pistol, one magazine and nine rounds. Jain said with the arrest all cases of grenade attacks that took place since November last year have been solved. *—PTI*

Cong worker killed by Naxalites in Chhattisgarh

BIJAPUR, 19 OCT

A Congress worker was attacked and killed allegedly by Naxalites in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district on Saturday, police said. Prima facie, the killing appears to be the handiwork of Naxalites, but all possible angles were being probed, they said. The incident occurred in Usoor village around 4pm when the victim, Tirupati Bhandari,35, who worked at a ration shop, was distributing rice to villagers, an official here said. "Unidentified people arrived at the scene and attacked Bhandari with sharp weapons, killing him on the spot," he said. A team from Usoor police station reached the spot and sent the body for post-mortem, the official said. *—PTI*

Wife of slain WB Cong leader died of poisioning: Report

KOLKATA, 19 OCT

Purnima Kandu, the wife of murdered Congress councillor Tapan Kandu, has reportedly died from poisoning, according to an autopsy report. Tapan Kandu was killed in March 2022, and Purnima, who was later elected as a municipal councillor in Jhalda, West Bengal, went on to become the vice-chairperson and eventually the chairperson of the Jhalda municipal agency. On t 11 October, during the final day of Durga Pooja, Purnima was found unconscious in her home. Her nephew, Mithun, has alleged that she was poisoned, and Congress's district president, Nepal Mahato, has called her death suspicious. *—Agencies*

RJD upset over seat deal by JMM-Cong

RJD says the seat-sharing talks were 'unilateral'

RJD Spokesperson Manoj Kumar Jha said that they have made it clear that all options were open to the party *PHOTO: ANI*

RANCHI, 19 OCT

Fissures surfaced among INDIA bloc partners ahead of the Jharkhand Assembly elections as the RJD on Saturday expressed disappointment over the announcement of JMM and Congress contesting 70 of 81 seats in the state.

The RJD said the decision on seat sharing by the two INDIA bloc constituents was "unilateral".

It also made it clear that "all options were open" to the party.

The Assembly polls will be held in two phases on 13 and 20 November and counting will take place on 23 November.

"We express our disappointment over the offer of seats to us. The decision is unilateral," Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) spokesperson Manoj Kumar Jha said.

Earlier in the day, Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren announced that the JMM and the Congress would contest 70 seats in the upcoming assembly elections.

Jha claimed, "We were not consulted. All options are open to us."

He said that the RJD has identified "at least 15 to 18 seats" in Jharkhand where it has the potential to defeat the BJP on its own.

Last time the party had contested seven seats and ended as runner-up in five of them.

Jha said several senior RJD leaders, including Leader of Opposition in Bihar Assembly Tejashwi Yadav, were in Ranchi and held a meeting this morning.

The JMM-led alliance had, in 2019, won 47 seats in the Jharkhand assembly, including 30 seats of JMM and 16 of the Congress.

Currently, the Jharkhand assembly has 74 members, with the JMM-led ruling alliance having 44 MLAs. *—PTI*

EC orders removal of acting J'khand DGP ahead of polls

RANCHI, 19 OCT

Ahead of the Jharkhand polls, the Election Commission on Saturday directed the state government to remove Acting Director General of Police (DGP) Anurag Gupta from his post with immediate effect due to a "history" of complaints against him in previous elections, sourc es said.

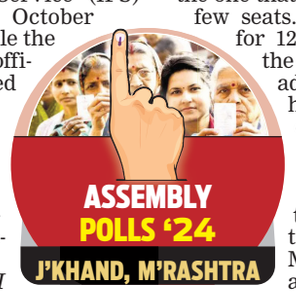
The Jharkhand Assembly elections will be held in two phases – 13 and 20 November.

The decision to remove Gupta was based on a history of complaints and action taken by the Commission against him during previous elections, the sources said.

As an interim, the charge of the DGP will now be handed over to the senior most DGP-level officer in the cadre, they said.

The state government has also been asked to submit a panel of names of senior Indian Police Service (IPS) officers by 21 October morning to enable the EC to pick an officer to be named the next DGP.

The state government has to submit a compliance report of these directions by this evening. *—PTI*



SP aims for 12 seat in MVA, says Akhilesh

Raut says NCP-Sena seat sharing talks are over

SP's Akhilesh Yadav said his party has declared candidates for five seats *PHOTO: ANI*

MUMBAI/ DHULE, 19 OCT

The Samajwadi Party (SP) has asked for 12 seats as part of the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in Maharashtra, party chief Akhilesh Singh Yadav said on Saturday, even as the alliance is yet to declare its seat-sharing arrangement. Talking to reporters in north Maharashtra's Dhule district, Yadav said his party has declared candidates for five seats. Yadav said his party is the one that is satisfied with a few seats. "We have asked for 12 seats (as part of the MVA)," he said, adding that the SP has shared details of the seats where it has a strong presence.

The SP's assertion has come at a time when the MVA constituents are in a stalemate over seat-sharing.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on Saturday said the seat-sharing talks between his party and the Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP) have concluded as these two parties are driven by a desire and mindset to resolve issues.

His remark is apparently targeted at the third Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) partner Congress again, a day after he expressed disappointment over the delay in the seat-sharing talks in the alliance and accused the Maharashtra Congress leaders of being incapable of making decisions.

Amid an impasse over seat-sharing among the three MVA parties, Uddhav Thackeray on Friday cautioned that haggling among allies must not be allowed to reach a breaking point.

The Assembly elections in Maharashtra will be held on 20 November. *—PTI*

EC calls for removal of misleading media posts

MUMBAI, 19 OCT

The Chief Electoral Officer of Maharashtra has sent notices to various social media platforms, asking them to take down a total of 1,752 posts that contained fake news and were meant to create confusion among voters.

More than 300 of these posts were deleted after they were flagged by the poll body, an official release said here on Friday. The notices were sent under section 79(3) (b) of the Information Technology Act, which empowers law enforcement agencies to order intermediaries to remove any content that can be used for unlawful activities.

143 posts were found on Facebook, 280 on Instagram, 1,296 on X , 31 on YouTube, and two on other platforms.

Facebook has so far deleted 16 posts. Instagram has deleted 29, X has deleted 251 and YouTube has deleted five posts since the notices were sent, the release said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

INDIA-US ROW

Pannun conspirator held by police in 2023

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

Vikas Yadav, a former Indian government official charged by the US authorities for his alleged role in a foiled plot to assassinate Sikh separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun on American soil, was arrested by Delhi Police in December last year in an unrelated extortion and kidnapping case, police sources said.

According to the sources, the Special Cell of Delhi Police arrested Yadav ,39, on 18 December, 2023, for allegedly kidnapping a businessman living in Rohini and demanding money in the name of jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi.

He was granted bail in April this year, the sources said.

According to the FIR filed by the Special Cell, Yadav told the businessman to meet him near the office of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in south Delhi on 11 December, 2023, claiming he might face a "serious threat".

Accordingly, the victim along with his friend met Yadav who was accompanied by a person named Abdullah.

The accused duo also forced him to sign a blank cheque before dropping him near his car after threatening him with dire consequences if he told anyone about his ordeal, it added. After returning home, the victim came to know that Yadav and his associate also took Rs 50,000 kept in his cafe and deleted all the CCTV recordings. *—PTI*

Manish Tewari *PHOTO: PTI*

Tewari pushes for Parl control over Intel Agencies

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

Congress leader Manish Tewari has favoured the regulation of Indian intelligence agencies through parliamentary oversight, remarks that come in the backdrop of the recent allegations emanating from the US and Canada.

The Lok Sabha MP from Chandigarh has already submitted a private bill in this regard and also called for a National Intelligence Tribunal to investigate complaints against these agencies.

The relations between India and Canada came under severe strain following Canada Prime Minister Trudeau's allegations in September last year of the "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, who was designated a terrorist by India, in Canada. *—PTI*

ED raids ex-YSRCP MP in money laundering case

HYDERABAD, 19 OCT

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Saturday raided the premises of former YSRCP MP and Telugu film producer MVV Satyanarayana and some others in Andhra Pradesh as part of a money laundering probe linked to a land grab case, official sources said.

At least five locations in Visakhapatnam, including that of the former MP and an auditor, were being raided by the officials of the federal agency, they said.

Satyanarayana lost the 2024 Lok Sabha polls from Visakhapatnam seat, which he contested on a YSRCP ticket. The money laundering case stems from a Visakhapatnam police FIR filed against Satyanarayana and others on 22 June for allegedly grabbing government land meant for building a residential facility for senior citizens and orphans. *—PTI*

J&K LG backs statehood resolution

SRINAGAR, 19 OCT

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha has cleared a resolution passed by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah-led cabinet urging the Centre to restore the statehood to the Union territory, officials said on Saturday.

"The cabinet which met under the chairmanship of Omar Abdullah on Thursday passed a unanimous resolution for restoration of statehood in its original form," an official spokesperson said.

Without giving any further details, the officials asserted that the LG has cleared the resolution passed by the cabinet.

The cabinet has authorised the chief minister to take up the matter with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Government of India for restoration of statehood, he said.

Protection of Jammu and Kashmir's unique identity and constitutional rights of people remains the cornerstone of the newly-elected government's policy, the spokesperson said. He said Omar would be proceeding to New Delhi to meet the Prime Minister and Union Ministers in this regard.

The cabinet has also decided to summon the Legislative Assembly at Srinagar on 4 November and advised the LG to summon and address the Assembly, the spokesperson added. *—PTI*

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah *PHOTO: PTI*

Didn't organise ADM's farewell: Kannur Collector

KANNUR 19 OCT

Kannur District Collector Arun K Vijayan on Saturday said he did not organise the farewell ceremony of late Additional District Magistrate Naveen Babu and therefore, he was not responsible for inviting anyone to the event.

His clarification came in the wake of allegations that he had invited former District Panchayat President PP Divya to the event where she had levelled corruption allegations against Babu who, subsequently, allegedly committed suicide.

Reportedly, Divya, in her anticipatory bail plea, claimed that the Collector had invited her to the event.

Speaking to reporters here, the Collector said, "The Collector is not the one who organises the farewell ceremony. It is the staff council which organises it and therefore, they can be asked whether Divya was invited." *—PTI*

Baba murder: 5 held had sought ₹50L for killing

MUMBAI, 19 OCT

The Mumbai police probing the Baba Siddique murder case have found that the five newly-arrested accused had demanded Rs 50 lakh for the killing, but backed out later due to disagreement over payment and also considering the NCP leader's clout, officials said.

Crime branch on Friday held the five accused for allegedly providing firearms and logistical support to the shooters of Siddique, taking the total number of arrests in the case to nine. They were identified as Nitin Gautam Sapre, 32, Sambhaji Kisan Pardhi, 44, Pradeep Dattu Thombre, 37, Chetan Dilip Pardhi and Ram Fulchand Kanoujia,43. Sapre is from Dombivali, while Pardhi, Thombre and Pardhi,27 are from Ambernath in Thane district. Kanoujia is a resident of Panvel in Raigad, police said.

Meanwhile, Mumbai Police suspended police security guard Shyam Sonawane, who was present with the former Maharashtra minister during the time of the incident.

In another development a photograph of Siddique's son Zeeshan was found on one of the shooter's phone during the investigation. Mathura Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Shailesh Pandey has suspended three police personnel after a video statement of Yogesh, a sharpshooter of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang went viral. The sharpshooter was seen speaking to local media crews while being in police custody at the Refinery police station. *—PTI*

ISSUE OF MIGRATION

'UK-India trade deal stalled over visa row'

LONDON, 19 OCT

Britain's former business and trade secretary Kemi Badenoch, who is the front-runner to succeed Rishi Sunak as Conservative Party chief and Opposition Leader, has claimed that she blocked the India-UK free trade agreement (FTA) over demands for more visas, according to UK media reports.

The Nigerian heritage shadow minister, who is going head-to-head in an ongoing Tory membership vote with former Cabinet colleague Robert Jenrick, has indicated that one of the reasons the FTA could not be signed off by the Sunak-led Tory government was due to the Indian side expecting more concessions over the issue of migration.

According to sources, the trade deal expected to significantly enhance the GBP 38 billion a year bilateral trading partnership *PHOTO: X*

"As business secretary, even as I was trying to do things to limit immigration, we had an India FTA where they kept trying to bring in migration and I said no. It's one of the reasons why we didn't sign it," Badenoch reportedly told 'The Telegraph'.

But some of her former Tory ministerial colleagues countered in 'The Times' that the claims are unlikely because Badenoch was pushing for a deal as she oversaw several rounds of negotiations as FTA expected to significantly enhance the GBP 38 billion a year bilateral trading partnership. "Kemi just wanted to get a deal at all costs and didn't really think that the objections that were being put forward were serious. She said they were ideologically driven, that they were impractical and weren't conducive to good relations with the Indians," a former Cabinet minister said. A source close to Badenoch, denied claims that she was prepared to sign a deal at any cost and said that the Indian government had decided not to sign a deal in the hope that it might be able to negotiate better terms under Labour. *—PTI*

Udhayanidhi faces action for dress code breach

CHENNAI, 19 OCT

An advocate from the city moved the Madras High Court on Saturday alleging dress code violation by Tamil Nadu Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin and sought a direction to adhere to the formal dress code as stipulated by the 2019 government order. Udhayanidhi's casual attire such as a T-shirt, jeans, and informal footwear at official events should be seen as violation of the government's formal dress code, the advocate M Sathya Kumar, said in his petition.

In the petition Kumar said the DMK leaders like CN Annadurai and M Karunanidhi adopted western-style shirts paired with traditional veshtis (dhotis) and this attire symbolised and reflected a modern progressive approach. The combination signalled that the DMK stood for both modernity and Tamil pride, he said.

Free yourself from divisive forces, CM tells Guv

Tamil Nadu Governor RN Ravi should free himself from divisive forces and discharge duties as per Constitutional norms, if he intends to continue as governor, Chief Minister MK Stalin said, and asked him to desist from converting Raj Bhavan into a political party office to depict Dravidian race in poor light.

Amidst the heightened war of words between the Governor and Chief Minister over the omission of a line from the state anthem during its rendition at the governor's event on Friday, Stalin sought to know why Ravi did not immediately condemn when a line from the Tamil anthem was missed right in front of him. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Remo booked for cheating dance troupe of ₹11.96 cr

THANE, 19 OCT

A case has been registered in Maharashtra's Thane district against choreographer Remo D'Souza, his wife and five others for allegedly cheating a dance troupe of Rs 11.96 crore, police said on Saturday. Based on a complaint by a 26-year-old dancer, a case was registered at Mira Road police station on 16 October against D'Souza, his wife Lizelle, five others under sections 465 (forgery), 420 (cheating) and other relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code, an official said. As per the FIR, the complainant and his troupe were allegedly cheated between 2018 and July 2024. The troupe performed on a television show and won, and the accused allegedly posed as if the group was theirs and claimed the prize money of Rs 11.96 crore, he said. *—PTI*

17 fishermen arrested by Sri Lanka repatriated

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

Seventeen Indian fishermen arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy for allegedly poaching in the island nation's waters have been repatriated, according to the Indian mission here. Fishermen from both countries are arrested frequently for inadvertently trespassing into each other's waters. The fishermen issue is a contentious topic in the bilateral ties, with Lankan Navy personnel even firing at Indian fishermen in the Palk Strait and seizing their boats in several alleged incidents of illegally entering Sri Lankan territorial waters. Sri Lanka claims a similar attitude by Indian authorities. The Palk Strait, a narrow strip of water separating Tamil Nadu from Sri Lanka, is a rich fishing ground for fishermen, who are arrested frequently for inadvertently trespassing into each other's waters. *—PTI*

Odisha man set on fire for 'practising' black magic

BHUBANESWAR, 19 OCT

A 50-year-old man was fighting for his life at a hospital in Odisha's Nuapada district after he was allegedly set on fire by villagers, accusing him of practising black magic, police said on Saturday. The residents of Portipada village had convened a meeting on Friday evening, and the victim, Kham Singh Majhi, was asked to be present there. The kangaroo court charged him with practising black magic, and as a "punishment", tied him with ropes made of straw and set him on fire, police said. As the blaze engulfed him, Majhi ran from one house to the other, screaming and shouting in pain. As no one came forward to help him, he finally jumped into a pond. *—PTI*

Centre nominates Vijaya Kishore as NCW Chairperson

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

The Centre has officially nominated Vijaya Kishore Rahatkar as the Chairperson of the National Commission for Women (NCW). The appointment, made under Section 3 of the National Commission for Women Act, 1990, will be for a period of three years or until she reaches the age of 65, whichever comes earlier, a government notification issued on Saturday said. Rahatkar's tenure will begin immediately. The announcement will be published in the Gazette of India. In addition to the appointment of Rahatkar, the government has also named new members to the NCW. Archana Majumdar has been officially appointed as a member of the National Commission for Women (NCW) for a tenure of three years, as per a notification from the Ministry of Women and Child Development. *—PTI*

Demolitions strike fear in Bahraich shopkeepers

Shopkeepers vacate after notice is served to 20 Muslim shops

LUCKNOW/BAHRAICH (UP), 19 OCT

Shopkeepers in Bahraich scrambled to salvage their goods on Saturday, apprehending a demolition drive by the authorities.

According to a local lawmaker, the Public Works Department has served notices to 23 establishments – 20 of them belonging to Muslims -- to vacate property.

The crackdown comes days after a 22-year-old Hindu man was shot dead in the Maharajganj area of the district during a communal flareup.

BJP MLA from Mahsi, Sureshwar Singh, told PTI, "People are vacating their shops. Those who don't, will be dealt with by the administration." Sonu Maurya, who runs an eatery on rent, said he was asked by his landlord to vacate the shop and take out his merchandise before it gets demolished. "I have a shop in Bhagwanpur, eight kilometres away from Maharajganj. The landlord told me that a notice of encroachment had been put on his construction and if a demolition took place, I would suffer losses," Maurya, who was on his way to Bhagwanpur, told PTI.

Samiullah, Sabina, and Rani Jaiswal, all locals, claimed they were being selectively targeted.

Shopkeepers in Bahraich scrambled to salvage their goods on Saturday, apprehending a demolition drive by the authorities PHOTO: PTI

The PWD on Friday carried out inspections in the Mahrajganj area and took measurements of 20-25 houses, including that of Abdul Hameed, one of the men accused of having a role in the killing of Ram Gopal Mishra on Sunday.

According to the notice put up at Abdul Hameed's house, the PWD said the construction was "illegal" since it was built within 60 feet of the central point of the road in rural areas, which is not allowed.

The notice asked Hameed to vacate the construction within three days or it would be demolished "and the expenses incurred for this action will be recovered from you through revenue means."

On Saturday, Samajwadi Party leader Mata Prasad Pandey was stopped from coming to Bahraich through an advance notice by the collector. By Friday, the UP Police had nabbed 87 people in Bahriach in connection with the rioting.

Ram Gopal Mishra was part of a Durga idol procession passing through the Maharajganj area on Sunday when he was shot. A video which circulated after the incident showed him removing a green flag from the rooftop of a house in a frenzy and supplanting it with a saffron flag. He was shot immediately afterwards. *—PTI*

MANIPUR BURNS

Fresh violence as militants attack village in Jiribam

Elderly people, women and children were being moved to safer places by security forces as the violence broke out PHOTO: PTI

IMPHAL, 19 OCT

- The violence was reported days after talks were held between MLAs of the warring Meitei and Kuki communities in New Delhi in a bid to hammer out a peaceful solution to the ongoing conflict.

Fresh violence broke out in Manipur on Saturday as militants attacked a village in Jiribam district, an official said.

Using sophisticated weapons, the militants opened fire, targeting the village in the vicinity of the Borobekra police station around 5 am, he said.

They also charged bombs, he added.

CRPF and police personnel retaliated and a heavy exchange of fire was underway, the official said.

Additional security forces were being rushed to the spot, he said.

No casualties have been reported so far, he said.

Elderly people, women and children were being moved to safer places by security forces as the violence broke out.

Borobekra, located around 30 km from Jiribam town, is surrounded by thick forests and a mountainous terrain. The area has witnessed several such attacks after the ethnic violence broke out in the state in May last year.

The violence was reported days after talks were held between MLAs of the warring Meitei and Kuki communities in New Delhi in a bid to hammer out a peaceful solution to the ongoing conflict. *—PTI*

2 militants arrested in Manipur

Two militants were arrested in Manipur's Imphal East district, police said on Saturday. Those arrested were identified as Mutum Inao Singh, 31, and Khwairakpam Rajen Singh, 25, of the proscribed Kangleipak Communist Party (People's War Group), they said. They were arrested from the Pureiromba Khongnangkhong area on Friday on charges of extortion and "other prejudicial activities", police said. A two-wheeler, three mobile phones, and Rs 7,600 in cash were seized from them. *—PTI*

SC need not act as Oppn in Parl, it is people's court: CJI

PANAJI, 19 OCT

Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud on Saturday said the role of the Supreme Court as a people's court must be preserved for the future, but it does not mean that it has to fulfil the role of an Opposition in Parliament.

He said one is entitled to criticise the court for the inconsistency of legal doctrine or an error, but one cannot look at its role or its work from the perspective of outcomes.

The CJI was addressing the first Supreme Court Advocates On Record Association (SCAORA) Conference in South Goa.

"The access to justice paradigm of the Supreme Court, which has been developed over the last 75 years, is something that we should not lose track of," he said.

PHOTO: PTI

When societies grow and evolve into prosperity and affluence, there is a perception that you should be looking at only the big-ticket items. Ours is not a court like that. Ours is a court which is a people's court and I think the role of Supreme Court as people's court must be preserved for the future, he said.

"Now, being a people's court is not to say that we fulfil the role of the opposition in Parliament," the CJI said.

"I think, particularly in today's times, there is this great divide between everybody who thinks that the Supreme Court is a wonderful institution when you decide in their favour, and it is an institution which is denigrated when you decide against them," he said. "I think that is a dangerous proposition because you cannot look at the role of the Supreme Court or its work from the perspective of the outcomes. The outcome of individual cases may be in your favour or maybe against you. The judges are entitled to decide with a sense of independence on a case-by-case basis," he added.

The CJI said that one is entitled to criticise the court for the inconsistency of legal doctrine or an error. *—PTI*

GUJARAT MOB BEATS MAN TO DEATH OVER THEFT

VADODARA, 19 OCT

A 30-year-old man was killed and another sustained injuries when a mob attacked them, suspecting them of being thieves in Gujarat's Vadodara city, police said on Saturday.

Three policemen were also injured when they tried to intervene during the attack that occurred near a police station in the Varasiya locality around midnight, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Panna Momaya said.

Locals caught three men, with several theft cases to their names, while they were trying to flee from the area, she said.

The official said the trio had come to the area on a stolen two-wheeler and were allegedly wandering around intending to commit theft. *—PTI*

6 people run over by speeding SUV in Bihar

BANKA, 19 OCT

Six people were run over by a speeding SUV in Bihar's Banka district, police said on Saturday.

The accident happened near Nagardih crossing in the Fullidumar police station area around 8.30 pm on Friday, they said.

"The deceased were pedestrians. Four persons died on the spot. Two persons succumbed to their injuries during treatment at the hospital," Sub-Divisional Police Officer Bipin Bihari told PTI.

"According to locals, the driver of the SUV fled immediately after the accident. A case has been registered and the matter is being investigated," he said.

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar expressed grief over the incident. *—PTI*

Didi junks docs demand to sack health secretary

KOLKATA, 19 OCT

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday urged the junior doctors protesting the rape and murder of their colleague at RG Kar Hospital to end their fast-unto-death, stating that most of their demands have been addressed while rejecting their insistence on removing the state health secretary.

Banerjee was speaking to them over the phone on Saturday afternoon when Chief Secretary Manoj Pant visited the site in Dharmatala where the junior doctors were sitting on fast unto death over the rape and murder of their colleague at the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital.

"Everybody has the right to protest, but it shouldn't affect healthcare services," she said, urging the doctors to withdraw their stir.

"Most of your demands have been fulfilled, give me three-four months more to meet the rest of the demands," she added.

Banerjee told the doctors she did not differ with their demands, requesting them to sit for talks with her government. Banerjee reassured them that the case is being probed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

"People are dependent on you for treatment. Where will the poor people go? They are treated free in government hospitals. Please forget my position and treat me as your 'Didi'. These are your just demands, but you should serve the people," she urged.

PHOTO: PTI

The doctors on Friday threatened to hold a strike by all medics in the state on 22 October if their demands are not met.

Stating that they are in talks with their colleagues in other states, the medics said there may also be a country-wide strike by doctors on Tuesday over the issue.

The junior medics said that they, along with senior doctors, were giving a deadline to the state government till 21 October to fulfil their demands.

"We want the chief minister (Mamata Banerjee) to sit for a discussion and implement all our demands," Debasish Halder, one of the agitating junior doctors, told reporters.

Claiming that the doctors were not against the interest of the people, he said they had withdrawn their earlier cease work for the same. *—PTI*

SEARCH FOR SURVIVORS

People search for survivors under the debris after an explosion at a firecracker factory, in Morena, Madhya Pradesh, Saturday. Several people are feared to be trapped under debris. The blast occurred inside a building where firecrackers were being made and gunpowder was present. The explosion was so intense that nearby houses developed cracks, and window panes were shattered PHOTO: PTI

2 DIE, BIHAR HOOCH TRAGEDY TOLL RISES TO 37

PATNA, 19 OCT

Two more peopledied after allegedly consuming spurious liquor, raising the toll in the hooch tragedy in the dry Bihar to 37, an official said on Saturday.

The latest deaths were reported from Baikunthpur in the Gopalganj district which shares border with Siwan and Saran districts, he said.

"As far as the death toll of Siwan and Saran is concerned, it's 35. It has not increased further. Now the total toll in all three districts under Saran range is 37," Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Nilesh Kumar told PTI. Twenty-eight people died in Maghar and Auriya panchayats in the Siwan district, while seven people died in Ibrahimpur in the Mashrakh police station area of Saran district after allegedly consuming spurious liquor. *—PTI*

WOMEN BELOW 50%

Breast cancer rising among youth: Experts

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

Breast cancer, a disease long associated with older age groups, has surged enormously in women aged below 50 in the last three decades, according to experts.

Breast cancer is the most common type of cancer affecting women worldwide, as well as in India.

The recent data from the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) showed that breast cancer accounted for 28.2 per cent of cancers in women.

Celebrities like Sonali Bendre, Tahira Kashyap, and Mahima Chaudhry who battled breast cancer under 50 and overcame the deadly disease with treatments.

Dr Ashish Gupta, Chief of Medical Oncology at Unique Hospital Cancer Centre, who is spearheading the Cancer Mukt Bharat Campaign in India, said "Cancer is no longer the disease of older adults. It is increasingly seen among women in the younger age group, majorly under 50."

Cancer affects about 20% of people below the age of 40 PHOTO: PTI

The early onset of breast cancer is majorly due to genes, lifestyle factors such as poor nutrition, consumption of highly ultra-processed foods and a completely sedentary lifestyle coupled with environment pollutants, he said.

According to a recent study by Cancer Mukt Bharat Foundation, cancer is affecting about 20 per cent of young people below the age of 40 in India and breast cancer cases account for 15 per cent of younger adults.

The risk factors for early onset include genetic predisposition to BRCA1 and BRCA2 gene mutations, obesity, excess sugar and processed food consumption, consistently high blood glucose and becoming insulin resistant, Dr Gupta said. The early detection and timely treatment of breast cancer significantly impact the lifespan of affected individuals. Making screening procedures better and more accessible is crucial, he said. Gupta, an American board-certified Medical Oncologist said, "Early detection programmes, including breast cancer awareness and cost-effective screening, is a must to fight the rising cases of breast cancer in India".

He also assured that people should not panic once diagnosed with the disease as there are many advanced treatments available currently that improve survival rates. *—PTI*

DOG ON GIZA PYRAMID

A viral video recorded by paraglider Alex Lang shows an aerial view of a dog exploring the top of a 450 feet tall Egyptian pyramid. The dog was recorded barking at birds from the top of the pyramid, which is about 3,800 years old
PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Israel & Hamas signal no end to Gaza war

Hamas confirmed Friday that its leader, Yahya Sinwar, was killed by Israeli forces in Gaza and reiterated its stance that hostages the militant group took from Israel a year ago will not be released until there is a cease-fire in Gaza and a withdrawal of Israeli troops.

The group's staunch position pushed back against a statement by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin a day earlier that his country's military will keep fighting until the hostages are released and will remain in Gaza to prevent a severely weakened Hamas from rearming.

The stands taken by the two sides signal, at least publicly, that they have not moved any closer to ending their conflict, even as President Joe Biden and other world leaders press the case that Sinwar's killing is a turning point that should be used to unlock stalled cease-fire negotiations.

Khalil al-Hayya, who was Sinwar's Qatar-based deputy and represented Hamas during several rounds of cease-fire negotiations, said the former Hamas leader died "confronting the occupation army until the last moment of his life." Hamas will not return any of the hostages, he said, "before the end of the aggression on Gaza and the withdrawal from Gaza."

Hamas heralded Sinwar in a statement, calling him a hero for "not retreating, brandishing his weapon, engaging and confronting the occupation army at the forefront of the ranks."

The statement appeared to refer to a video the Israeli military circulated of Sinwar's apparent last moments in which a man sits on a chair in severely damaged building, badly wounded and covered in dust. In the video, the man raises his hand and flings a stick at an approaching Israeli drone.

Sinwar was the chief architect of the Hamas raid on Israel last year that killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and kidnapped another 250. Israel's retaliatory offensive in Gaza has killed over 42,000 Palestinians, according to local health authorities, who do not distinguish combatants from civilians but say more than half the dead are women and children.

Part of the IDF force that encountered and killed Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar seen operating in Rafah ***PHOTO: ISRAEL DEFENCE FORCES***

The war has destroyed vast swaths of Gaza, displaced about 90 per cent of its population of 2.3 million people and has left them struggling to find food, water, medicine and fuel.

Sinwar's killing appeared to be a chance front-line encounter with Israeli troops on Wednesday, and it could shift the dynamics of the Gaza war even as Israel presses its offensive against Hezbollah with ground troops in southern Lebanon and airstrikes in other areas of the country.

Hezbollah has fired rockets into Israel nearly every day since the Israel-Hamas war began, displacing tens of thousands of Israelis from their homes in the country's north. Roughly 1 million people in Lebanon have been displaced by Israel's aerial bombardment and ground offensive.

Both Hamas and Hezbollah are backed by Iran, which hailed Sinwar as a martyr who can inspire others in challenging Israel.

Israel has pledged to destroy Hamas politically in Gaza, and killing Sinwar was a top military priority. Photos which were apparently taken by Israeli troops on the scene showed the body of a man who appeared to be him, half-buried in rubble and with a gaping wound in his head.

Netanyahu said in a speech announcing the killing Thursday night that "our war is not yet ended."

But many, from the governments of Israel's allies to exhausted residents of Gaza, expressed hope that Sinwar's death would pave the way for an end to the war.

US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said Friday Sinwar's death provides "an extraordinary opportunity to achieve a lasting cease-fire" and suggested the US could have a role in helping to stabilize Gaza in the future. "Hopefully countries in the region will step up there," Austin said at a NATO meeting in Brussels.

In Israel, families of hostages still held in Gaza demanded the Israeli government use Sinwar's killing as a way to restart negotiations to bring home their loved ones. There are about 100 hostages remaining in Gaza, at least 30 of whom Israel says are dead.

Israel's military said Friday it allowed 30 trucks of food, water, medical and other supplies into northern Gaza, as the country faces pressure from the US to ramp up aid. There was no immediate confirmation from the UN that the aid arrived and was being distributed in the north.

Hezbollah's statement appeared to refer to an explosives-laden drone that evaded Israel's multilayered air-defence system and slammed into a mess hall at a military training camp deep inside Israel last Sunday, killing four soldiers and wounding dozens.

The group also announced earlier this week that it fired a new type of missile called Qader 2 toward the suburbs of Tel Aviv.

The Israeli military said it would activate an additional reserve brigade to the north of its country to support troops battling in southern Lebanon.

Hezbollah said its fighters were working according to "plans prepared in advance" to battle invading Israeli troops in several parts of south Lebanon.

Earlier this week, Hezbollah's acting leader Naim Kassem said the group will continue to target wider areas of Israel.

As Israel fought militants in Lebanon and in Gaza, its military said Friday that its forces had killed two militants who crossed into Israeli territory south of the Dead Sea from neighbouring Jordan.

Such infiltrations are relatively rare, especially as Israel has ramped up border security since the Hamas attack in October 2023. *—PTI*

SALAR سالار بنگلور

India: When stick figure cartoons are seen as a threat

It started as a thing on the side to make my friends laugh.

Rachita Taneja uploaded her first comic on Facebook in 2014. Already working for a nonprofit organization at the time, the human rights campaigner was also "chronically online," which meant she found it "hard to es-cape the news," she told DW at the Human Rights Film Festival in Berlin, where the Indian cartoonist was invited to present "Drawing a Line," a documentary portraying her work.

Back when she started, Narendra Modi had been newly elected as India's prime minister. She felt she had to directly react to his government's attempts to curb freedom of speech.

Using simple stick figures, she kept drawing her comics, commenting on all sorts of social, political and cultural topics, from #MeTooand patriarchy to freedom of speech and harassment against minorities.

The cartoons are all collected in her web series, called Sanitary Panels — a pun combining "sanitary pads" and "comic panels," reflecting her feminist focus.

Ten years later, Sanitary Panels has more than 133,000 followers on Instagram and nearly 50,000 on X, for-merly Twitter. She has gained international recognition and was honored with the 2024 Kofi Annan Courage in Cartooning Award.

Taneja's doodles could even land her in prison, as a Supreme Court case has been issued against her. Charged with "contempt of court" at the end of 2020 for drawings criticizing the institution, she is still waiting for the outcome of the court case today, four years later.

She first became aware of the case after someone tagged her on social media. "I found out on Twitter that there was a case against me, and I immediately had a panic attack," she said.

"How is the highest court in the largest democracy in the world talking about my stick figures?" she asks in the documentary.

India's freedom of expression under threat

"India's media has fallen into an 'unofficial state of emergency' since Narendra Modi came to power in 2014," noted Reporters Without Borders, which ranked India at 159 out of 180 countries in its 2024 Press Freedom Index.

The nongovernmental organization also highlights the close ties between Modi and the families owning the country's main media outlets. As a result, Reporters Without Borders said, mainstream media serves as the mouthpiece of the government. Modi's party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), is criticized for pushing part of the agenda of Hindu extremists, who are sowing terror against Muslims in a climate of impunity.

Coordinated campaigns calling for revenge against government critics are organized by the Hindu far right. "Journalists who are critical of the government are routinely subjected to online harassment, intimida-tion, threats and physical attacks, as well as criminal prosecutions and arbitrary arrests," said the latest re-port from Reporters Without Borders.

India's youth turning to the internet

Meanwhile, the internet provides alternatives for many people in the country. "Online news, particular-ly on social media, is favored by a younger population and has overtaken print media as the main source of news," said Reporters Without Borders.

A 2023 BBC documentary investigating the Modi's government's role in spreading hate against India's Mus-lims was blocked in the country. Authorities banned the sharing of clips of the documentary, and asked Twitter and YouTube to take down links and videos.

Similarly, Taneja points out that the number of followers of the Sanitary Panels webcomic skyrocketed right after the Supreme Court case was announced.

However, since the BJP failed to secure a majority in the June elections, Modi now has to work with coali-tion partners and has not managed to pass the draft bill, which is now being reworked.

'Plain and simple' censorship

Still, many political commentators, journalists, artists, activists and comedians — including Kunal Kamra, one of India's most popular stand-up comedians, who is also facing a Supreme Court lawsuit — remain on their toes.

Despite the threats and censorship, Taneja plans to stay in her home country. "I love India too much," she said.

She sees it as unfair to even have to think about moving for safety reasons — immediately adding that she recognizes being in a position of privilege in Indian society, through the fact that she was born Hindu and up-per caste, and having had access to a good education and world travel.

And beyond giving a voice to those who don't have as much privilege as she does, Sanitary Panels has become an essential part of Taneja's life. *—DW NEWS*

Political cartoonist Rachita Taneja sees it as her duty to give a voice to those who don't have as much privilege as she does ***PHOTO: DW NEWS***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

What are digital arrests, newest deepfake tool used by cybercriminals?

An Indian textile baron has revealed that he was duped out of USD 833,000 by online scammers impersonating federal investigators and even the Supreme Court chief justice.The fraudsters posing as officers from India's Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) called SP Oswal, chairman and managing director of the textile manufacturer Vardhman, on 28 August and accused him of money laundering.

For the next two days, Oswal was under digital surveillance as he was ordered to keep Skype open on his phone 24/7 during which he was interrogated and threatened with arrest. The fraudsters also conducted a fake virtual court hearing with a digital impersonation of Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud as the judge.

Oswal paid the amount after the court verdict via Skype without realising that he was the latest victim of an online scam using a new modus operandi, called "digital arrest".

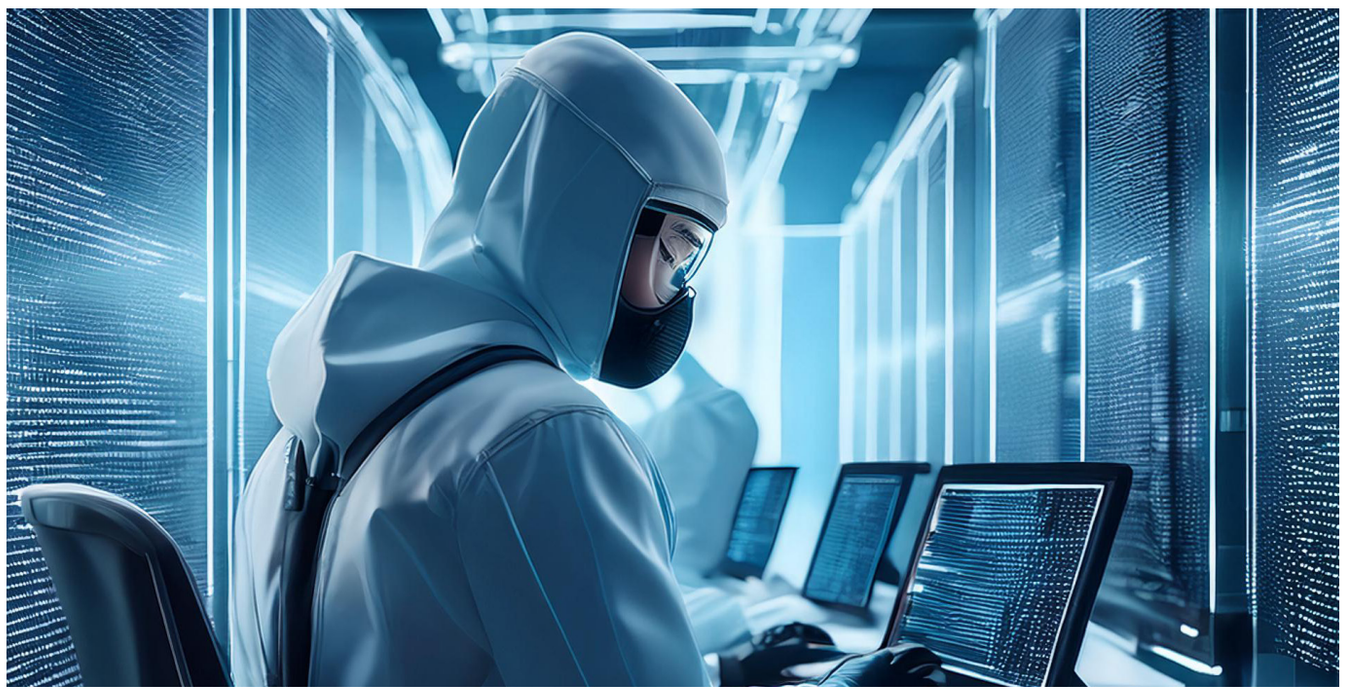
Digital arrest is a new form of online fraud, in which scammers convince victims they are under a "digital" or "virtual" arrest and the victim is coerced into staying connected with the scammer through video-conferencing software. The fraudsters then manipulate their targets into maintaining continuous video contact, effectively holding them hostage to the fraudulent demands of the scammers.

Similar to phishing, a digital arrest, is a type of cyberattack that involves tricking individuals into revealing sensitive information that may involve identity theft, financial loss, or stealing data for malicious purposes. The techniques have become more sophisticated with the advent of AI-generated audio and video.

The scammer will dangle an extreme loss, whether financial or some other legal consequence, convincing the victim they are "here to help". Many victims are lulled or coerced into lowering their guard and following the instructions of the scammer.

What makes many of these scams seem legitimate is the use of video-conferencing software. Most scams are faceless, with the interactions happening through a simple phone call. With video-conferencing software, an individual using sophisticated deepfake video technology can appear as a completely different – and often real – person participating in the video call.

Moreover, with a snippet of audio, perhaps from a judge or high-level police officer, an audio AI engine can replicate a person's voice, which can then be used by the scammer.



Digital arrest is a type of cyberattack that involves tricking individuals into revealing sensitive information that may involve identity theft, financial loss, or stealing data for malicious purposes ***PHOTO: AI***

"'This is just a newfangled spear-phishing, is the way I would put it, because it's highly targeted and it shows far greater awareness of the victim's circumstances than the old phishing, where some prince from somewhere says he needed to send money to the US and somehow, you're the only way he can do it," VS Subrahmanian, professor of computer science at Northwestern University said. These new deepfake technologies allow a fraudster to embed anyone in the world into a video or photo, even adding audio using a deepfake AI multimedia stream, then to pose as the individual in a video conference call like Zoom, Skype or Teams. Unless the host of the call has anti-deepfake software, the deepfake can be hard to spot.

Some deepfake software only needs 10 seconds to a minute of audio of a person talking to replicate various speech patterns, emotions, and accent of the subject. AI voice software will even account for natural pauses, inflexion of certain letters, and voice pitch, making the replica virtually indistinguishable from the audio that is actually coming from the real person.

According to a New York Times article, last month a caller posed as former Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, in a video-conference call with Senator Benjamin L Cardin, the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee.

Although there was no monetary fraud, this raises dangers that fraudulent actors can manipulate key political leaders to influence certain outcomes of political elections or high-stakes initiatives.

However, Subrahmanian suggested relying only on deepfake-detection software is not enough. There will need to be awareness-building about these deepfake technologies, and possibly a global initiative, similar to General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) privacy law enacted by the European Union. Organisations responsible for enforcing international laws and cooperation agreements need improved training and more effective tools, he said. *—Courtesy, Al Jazeera*

PHOTO: PTI

Cuba suffers blackout after power plant fails

HAVANA, 19 OCT

Cuba's electrical grid went offline on Friday after one of the island's major power plants failed, the Energy Ministry said. The announcement came hours after the government announced that one of the nation's main thermoelectric plants, La Antonio Guiteras, had ceased operations at about 11am local time, with authorities saying it was only offline temporarily. Hours earlier, Prime Minister Manuel Marrero had sought to assuage concerned citizens about the blackout that began on Thursday evening. A massive outage left millions without power and prompted the government on Friday to implement emergency measures to slash demand, including suspending classes, shutting down sworkplaces and cancelling non-essential services. *—PTI*

Four new polio cases reported in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, 19 OCT

Pakistan reported another four cases of poliovirus taking the national tally to 37 this year, a media report said on Saturday. The regional reference laboratory for polio eradication at the National Institute of Health, Islamabad, on Friday, confirmed the detection of wild poliovirus type-1 (WPV 1) in three children from Balochistan and one child from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Dawn newspaper reported. The children affected by the wild poliovirus include a girl from Pishin, two boys from Chaman and Noshki in Balochistan, and a girl from Lakki Marwat district of KP, according to an official of the regional reference laboratory for polio eradication. "Genetic sequencing of the cases is underway," one of the officials disclosed. *—PTI*

First migrants sent to Albania return to Italy

SHENGJIN, 19 OCT

An Italian navy ship on Saturday took back to Italy the first 12 migrants from newly opened asylum processing centres in Albania following a court decision in Rome. The court ruling on Friday represents an early stumbling block to a five-year deal between Italy and Albania for Tirana to host 3,000 migrants per month picked up by the Italian coast guard. They will be vetted for possible asylum in Italy or to be sent back to their countries.
Italian Premier Minister Giorgia Meloni has hailed it as a new "model" to handle illegal migration.
Each migrant's detention must be reviewed by special migration courts in Italy under Italian law.*—PTI*

Mexican Navy seizes drugs worth $100 million

MEXICO, 19 OCT

Mexico's navy on Friday made its largest-ever drug bust, seizing 8.4 tonnes of unspecified drugs valued at more than 2 billion pesos (USD100 million). "This represents the largest quantity of drugs seized in a maritime operation, without precedent in the history of the institution," the navy said in a statement. Authorities also arrested 23 people, while seizing 8,700 liters of fuel and six boats in the operation that occurred off the Pacific coast near the port city of Lazaro Cardenas. The drugs had been distributed among the six boats, one of which was a "submersible" which implies a "complex" drug trafficking operation. This latest haul marks a victory in Mexico's ongoing fight against drug trafficking, as the country remains a key transit point for narcotics headed to the United States.*—DW News*

50 KILLED IN ISRAELI STRIKES IN GAZA

Meanwhile, Israel says it supplied Gaza's isolated north with 30 truckloads of aid

JERUSALEM, 19 OCT

PHOTO: X

More than 50 people were killed in several Israeli strikes in Gaza over the past day, according to reports on Saturday by local hospital officials, Associated Press journalists, and the Palestinian Authority news agency.

The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) said its strikes targeted terror sites in the Strip, and that it took measures to warn uninvolved parties to vacate the area. It said troops had killed dozens of gunmen in close-quarters combat.

Meanwhile, Israel was said to be increasing the flow of supplies to the Strip's much-battered north while pressing on with a renewed offensive there.

Strikes were reported at a number of hospitals and inactive schools sheltering displaced people. Israel says terror operatives regularly use such facilities as operating bases, and that it makes an effort to avoid harm to innocents.

Marwan Sultan, director of the Indonesian hospital, said Israeli tanks had surrounded the hospital, cut off its electricity and shelled its second and third floors, causing risk to staff and patients.

At Al-Awda Hospital, strikes hit the building's top floors, injuring several staff members, the hospital said in a statement.

According to WAFA, the official PA news agency, at least seven people were killed and several were injured in the strike on the school in Shati in the Strip's north.

In central Gaza, at least 10 people were killed, including two children, when a house was hit in the town of Zawayda, according to the al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital where the casualties were taken.

Another strike killed 11 people, all from the same family, in the Maghazi refugee camp, according to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah, where they were taken.

Overnight between Thursday and Friday, the strikes on Jabaliya killed at least 30 people. Fares Abu Hamza, head of the Hamas-run health ministry's ambulance and emergency service, said more than half of them were women and children.

The IDF said its forces, which have been operating in Jabaliya for the past two weeks, killed dozens of gunmen on Thursday, carried out aerial strikes and dismantled military infrastructure. Israel had urged all civilians to evacuate northern Gaza at the start of the war. *—Agencies*

Israel unearths Hezbollah's tunnels

TEL AVIV, 19 OCT

Israeli forces have spent much of the past year destroying Hamas' vast underground network in Gaza. They are now focused on dismantling tunnels and other hideouts belonging to Hezbollah militants in southern Lebanon.

Scarred by Hamas' deadly raid into Israel last year that sparked the war in Gaza, Israel says it aims to prevent a similar incursion across its northern border from ever getting off the ground.

The Israeli military has combed through the dense brush of southern Lebanon for the past two weeks, uncovering what it says are Hezbollah's deep attack capabilities — highlighted by a tunnel system equipped with weapons caches and rocket launchers that Israel says pose a direct threat to nearby communities.

With Israel's air power far outstripping Hezbollah's defences, the militant group has turned to underground tunnels as a way to elude Israeli drones and jets. Political analysts say that the tunnels stretch under the southern suburbs of Beirut, where Hezbollah's command and control are located and where it keeps a stockpile of strategic missiles. She said the group also maintains tunnels along the border with Syria, which it uses to smuggle weapons and other supplies from Iran into Lebanon. Southern Lebanon is where Hezbollah maintains tunnels to store missiles — and from where it can launch them, Koulouriotis said. Some of the more than 50 Israelis killed by Hezbollah over the past year were hit by anti-tank missiles.

In contrast to the tunnels dug out by Hamas in the sandy coastal terrain of Gaza, Hezbollah's tunnels in southern Lebanon were carved into solid rock, a feat that likely required time, money, machinery and expertise. *—PTI*

NORTH KOREA CLAIMS TO HAVE FOUND CRASHED SOUTH KOREAN DRONE

PYONGYANG, 19 OCT

North Korea on Saturday released photos of the remains of a South Korean military drone that it said was found in Pyongyang, that analysts confirmed resembled South Korean military drones.

According to state media KCNA, Seoul uses drones to drop propaganda over the capital Pyongyang.

"It is quite likely that the drone is the one which scattered leaflets over the center of Pyongyang Municipality," said KCNA. "But the conclusion has not yet been drawn."

A North Korean defense ministry spokesperson said authorities found the remains of the crashed drone during a search of the capital on 13 October, KCNA reported.. *—DW News*

CHINA'S XI JINPING INSPECTS MUCH-PURGED ROCKET FORCE

BEIJING, 19 OCT

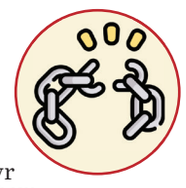
Chinese President Xi Jinping has inspected a brigade of the military's strategic missile force that underwent a massive purge of officials for corruption in recent years, according to a media report on Saturday.

Xi on Thursday visited at Hefei the Chinese People's Liberation Army's (PLA) Rocket Force, a key arm of the military operating the missiles, including nuclear weapons, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

He urged the strategic missile troops to strengthen their deterrence and combat capabilities and resolutely fulfil the tasks entrusted by the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the people, the report said.. *—PTI*

RUSSIA AND UKRAINE EXCHANGE AROUND 190 PRISONERS OF WAR

KYIV, 19 OCT



Russia's Defence Ministry said that it freed 95 Ukrainian prisoners in exchange for an equal number of its forces on Saturday. Ukraine has not yet specified the number of captives freed.

But Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy posted a video of men, some of them wrapped in the Ukrainian flag, getting off a bus and reuniting with their families, confirming the news.

Meanwhile, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot pledged his support for Ukraine's plan for ending the two and a half-year war with Russia, telling reporters in Kyiv on Saturday that he will work with Ukrainian officials to secure other nations' backing for the proposal. *—Agencies*

PHOTO: FLIP.IT

Obama supports Kamala in swing state, Arizona

WASHINGTON DC, 19 OCT

Barack Obama questioned Donald Trump's stamina for high office, as he campaigned on behalf of Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris in the swing state of Arizona.

At a Saturday rally in the city of Tucson, Obama needled Trump on his ability to serve a second term, a theme Harris and campaign surrogates have recently leaned into.

"Along with his intentions, there is also a question of his competence. Have you seen him lately?" asked Obama. "I mean, he is out there, he's giving two, two-and-a-half hour speeches, just word salads. You have no idea what he's talking about."

Democrats have been quick to call into question whether Trump is young enough and mentally competent enough to serve another term in the White House.

Arizona, where Obama spoke , is one such state, with polling averages showing Trump with an average lead of about two points. In Michigan, where Harris spoke on the same day, the Democratic vice president is ahead by less than one point.

Democrats have frequently portrayed Trump as a dangerous figure. *—Al Jazeera*

UN EXPANDS HAITI ARMS EMBARGO TO ALL WEAPONS

BRUSSELS, 19 OCT

The UN Security Council has voted unanimously to expand its arms embargo in Haiti because of grave concerns over extremely high levels of gang violence.

The embargo will extend to all types of arms and ammunition in the Caribbean country, which faces multiple challenges.

The resolution authorises the 193 UN member nations to take "appropriate steps to prevent the illicit trafficking and diversion of arms and related materiel in Haiti".

The resolution also extends a travel ban and asset freeze on gang members and criminals on its blacklist. Haiti has faced years of instability, but the situation has worsened since the July 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moise. It created a power vacuum which increased the influence of armed gangs. It is estimated they now control up to 80 percent of the capital, Port-au-Prince. It means illicit weapons flow unchecked into the country. The resulting surge in rapes and kidnappings has led to a rise of civilian vigilante groups. *—Al Jazeera*

Putin pushes to end dollar dominance

MOSCOW, 19 OCT

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said the multi-nation BRICS group should explore a SWIFT-like cross-border payments system immune to Western sanctions as well as use national digital currencies in financing investment projects to end US dollar dominance.

Ahead of the 16th annual summit of leaders of BRICS to be hosted by Russia, Putin also said the time has not come yet for a common BRICS currency but added that the 10-nation bloc is exploring the use of digital currencie for which his country is working with India and other nations.

Russia, which was slapped with sweeping sanctions by the US and its allies in the aftermath of the conflict with Ukraine that erupted in February 2022, wants to circumvent the global financial system by creating a new payments system based on a network of commercial banks linked to each other through the BRICS central banks.

Advocating a cautious approach in creating a new reserve currency due to differences in the structure and quality of the economies of the BRICS member states, Putin said these countries should focus on the use of the national currencies, new financial instruments and the creation of an analogue of SWIFT.

It will also be the first ever summit of the grouping after its expansion with the entry of Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa are the original members of the BRICS.

Putin said the BRICS was now studying the possibility of expanding the use of the national currencies and creation of instruments that would make such work safe. In particular, the BRICS states were considering the possibility of using electronic instruments, he added. *—PTI*

PHOTO:X@VIVEK4REAL_

JAPAN'S RULING PARTY HQ ATTACKED WITH FIREBOMBS

TOKYO, 19 OCT

A man threw several firebombs into the headquarters of Japan's ruling party in Tokyo Saturday, then crashed his car into the fencing of the prime minister's residence, Tokyo police said. There were no reports of injuries.The man, identified by police as Atsunobu Usuda, 49, was arrested on the spot on charges of obstructing the performance of official duties, although additional charges can be added later. Japanese media reports said social media posts believed to be Usuda's showed him complaining about the sums of money required to run for office under Japanese law, implying he had political ambitions. *—PTI*

JOURNALISTS TARGETTED

Freedom of expression threatened in Gaza

UNITED NATIONS, 19 OCT

According to UN, Israel's military actions are matters of public interest, scrutiny and criticism PHOTO: PTI

Freedom of expression has been threatened more seriously in Gaza than in any recent conflict, with journalists targeted in the war-torn territory and Palestinian supporters targeted in many countries, a United Nations expert said on Saturday.

Irene Khan, the UN independent investigator on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, pointed to attacks on the media and the targeted killings and arbitrary detention of dozens of journalists in Gaza.

"The banning of Al Jazeera, the tightening of censorship within Israel and in the occupied territories, seem to indicate a strategy of the Israeli authorities to silence critical journalism and obstruct the documentation of possible international crimes," she said. Khan also sharply criticised the "discrimination and double standards" that have seen restrictions and suppression of pro-Palestinian protests and speech. She cited bans in Germany and other European countries, protests that were "crushed harshly" on US college campuses, and Palestinian national symbols and slogans prohibited and even criminalized in some countries. The UN special rapporteur also pointed to "the silencing and sidelining of dissenting voices in academia and the arts," with some of the best academic institutions in the world failing to protect all members of their community, "whether Jewish, Palestinian, Israeli, Arab, Muslim, or otherwise."While social media platforms have been a lifeline for communications to and from Gaza, Khan said, they have seen an upsurge in disinformation, misinformation and hate speech — with Arabs, Jews, Israelis and Palestinians all targeted online.

She stressed that Israel's military actions are matters of public interest, scrutiny and criticism. *—PTI*

7 terrorists of banned TTP, ISIS held in Pakistan

LAHORE, 19 OCT

PHOTO: PTI

Law enforcement agencies claim to have arrested seven alleged terrorists of banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and ISIS in the Punjab province of Pakistan, police said on Saturday.

"The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) of Punjab police foiled a major terror plan by arresting seven terrorists from different cities of the province," a CTD spokesperson said on Saturday.

He said the CTD Punjab conducted 129 intelligence-based operations in different districts of the province and arrested seven terrorists from Lahore, Bhakkar, Attock, Bahawalpur and Jhang, and recovered weapons, bombs and explosives from their possession.

The arrested terrorists are identified as Hayatullah, Sheen Khan, Muhammad Siddiq, Zahoor Ahmed, Ikram Khan, Mubashir Ali, and Khan Muhammad and they belong to TTP and ISIS.

The spokesman said the terrorists had planned sabotage in the province and wanted to target important installations and other places. He said the terrorists have been shifted to an undisclosed location for further investigation. *—PTI*

PHOTO:WIKIPEDIA

PFC, BEML ink pact to finance infra projects in defence

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

State-owned BEML and PFC have signed an agreement to finance and execute critical infrastructure projects, particularly in the areas of defence, rail transportation and infrastructure development. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between BEML CMD Shantanu Roy and Parminder Chopra, CMD of PFC in the national capital on Friday, BEML said in a statement. BEML and PFC entered into a strategic MoU which aims at intensifying cooperation in financing and executing critical infrastructure projects, particularly in the areas of defence, rail transportation and infrastructure development, it said. "The partnership is a significant step forward in supporting India's infrastructure and defence sectors. The synergy between our expertise in infrastructure development and defence production, combined with PFC's financial strength, will help deliver transformative projects that will have a lasting impact on India's economy and security landscape," Roy said. The MoU places a strong emphasis on advancing defence manufacturing in line with the Indian government's 'AatmaNirbhar Bharat' vision, which focuses on achieving self-reliance in defence production. —*PTI*

Analog Devices sees India as key R&D hub

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

Global semiconductor firm Analog Devices India (ADI) sees India as a pivotal hub for its R&D efforts, recognising the country not only as a key player in engineering talent but also as a burgeoning market opportunity, a company executive said. With its R&D centre in Bengaluru being one of the largest globally, ADI is tapping into India's vast potential to contribute significantly to the semiconductor industry, which is projected to double in size over the next seven years, reaching over a trillion dollars, said Srinivas Prasad, Senior Director, India Site Head, Analog Devices India. "We are looking at India as one of the most strategic research and development (R&D) sites for Analog Devices, and Bengaluru is one of our largest R&D centres globally. From a talent point of view, I think almost every chip that gets taped out from Analog Devices, ADI India would have played a role one way or the other," he said. Prasad said the company is also simultaneously exploring the immense market opportunities that India presents. —*PTI*

SMPP files draft papers with SEBI; eyes ₹4,000 cr

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

Defence equipment manufacturer SMPP Ltd has filed preliminary papers with capital markets regulator Sebi to raise Rs 4,000 crore through an initial public offering (IPO). The IPO comprises a fresh issue of equity shares aggregating up to Rs 580 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of equity shares worth up to Rs 3,420 crore by promoter Shiv Chand Kansal, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) filed on Friday. At present, Kansal holds 50 per cent stake in the company. The company may consider a pre-IPO placement of securities valued at Rs 116 crore. If such placement is carried out, the fresh issue size will be reduced. Proceeds from the fresh issue will be utilised primarily for capital expenditure of Rs 437.04 crore, which includes constructing buildings, land development, and procuring plant and machinery for a planned ammunition manufacturing facility through investment in a subsidiary. The remaining amount will be allocated for general corporate purposes. The shares of SMPP will be listed on the BSE and the NSE. —*PTI*

FM invites Mexican firms to explore opportunities in India

Summit was centered on boosting ties in IT, pharma & healthcare

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman, on Saturday invited Mexican investors to explore opportunities in India's Global In-House Capability Centers (GICCs), aircraft leasing, ship leasing, and even foreign university setups at GIFT-IFSC, which is emerging as a global hub for reinsurance and sustainable finance.

She participated in the India-Mexico Trade and Investment Summit, marking a significant step towards enhancing bilateral trade and investment ties between both countries. She urged private sector leaders from both nations to drive forward this growing partnership, particularly in sectors like pharmaceuticals, MedTech, and digital innovation, to strengthen the economic ties between India and Mexico.

Addressing the summit, Finance Minister Sitharaman highlighted the potential for a multi-sectoral partnership between India and Mexico, emphasising India's growing strength in manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, and automotive sectors.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman with her Mexican counterpart Rogelio Ramirez de la O on Saturday *PHOTO: X/MINISTRY OF FINANCE*

She recalled the elevation of India-Mexico relations from a 'Privileged Partnership' to a 'Strategic Partnership' during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 2016 visit to Mexico.

Emphasising India's political stability, a large skilled workforce, and growing infrastructure, the Finance Minister said that joint efforts can focus on strengthening resilience through diversification, especially for critical components like semiconductors, printed circuit boards PCBs, and other high-tech electronics.

She also underscored India's leadership in the digital economy, noting that India's fintech sector has an adoption rate of 87 per cent, bolstered by initiatives like UPI and IndiaStack. The minister proposed that the India-Mexico partnership could leverage these advancements for cross-border collaborations, particularly in fintech and digital payments.

Further, Sitharaman invited Mexican investors to explore opportunities in India's Global In-House Capability Centers (GICCs), aircraft leasing, ship leasing, and even foreign university setups at GIFT-IFSC, which is emerging as a global hub for reinsurance and sustainable finance.

The Summit was centered on boosting collaboration between the two nations in diverse sectors including IT, pharmaceuticals, healthcare, and automotive industries. —*ANI*

Vedanta to invest ₹1L crore in Odisha

MUMBAI, 19 OCT

Vedanta Limited has announced a new investment of Rs. 1 lakh crore to set up an alumina refinery and an aluminium plant in Odisha.

The company said that the investment will be directed towards establishing a 6 million tons per annum alumina refinery and a 3 million tons aluminium plant, focused on producing green aluminium powered by renewable energy.

In addition, the company in collaboration with the Government of Odisha will establish education centres, hospitals, skill development centres, and Nandghars to benefit the people of the state.

It said this will be the largest investment ever made in Odisha which will create 2 lakh jobs and opportunities for 1000s of MSMEs.

Reacting to the investment move by the Vedanta, Chief Minister of Odisha Mohan Charan Majhi said, "Vedanta has joined hands with our government to double their investment in Odisha and further invest Rs. 1 Lakh Cr including a new 6 million Ton Alumina refinery & 3 Million Ton Smelter which will create more jobs for the people of the state. I take this opportunity to thank Agarwal for this new investment and ensure that the state government will provide full support towards the development of these projects."

PHOTO: ANI

- Vedanta in collaboration with the Government of Odisha will establish education centres, hospitals, skill development centres, and Nandghars to benefit the people of the state

Anil Agarwal, Chairman, of Vedanta Ltd, commented, "Odisha has always played an important role in Vedanta's growth. Under the leadership of Majhi, we will continue to contribute to the state's economic progress, empower communities, and enhance the quality of life for millions in Odisha." —*ANI*

AMID PROTESTS

2.62LMT paddy lifted, 16.37L MT procured in Punjab

Several farmers' groups have been protesting against the slow procurement of paddy, which led to a glut in mandis *PHOTO: X*

CHANDIGARH, 19 OCT

Around 2.62 lakh metric tonnes of paddy have been lifted out of total procurement of 16.37 lakh MT so far in state mandis, Punjab Food and Civil Supplies Minister Lal Chand Kataruchak said on Saturday.

Amid farmers protesting against "tardy" procurement of the paddy crop, he urged the state rice millers to come forward and start their milling operations, asserting that the state government always stands by them.

Several farmers' groups have been protesting against the slow procurement of paddy, which led to a glut in mandis. The state rice millers and the commission agents are also supporting the farmers' protest. Rice millers have also expressed concern over the out-turn ratio (post milling yield) of the PR-126 paddy variety, claiming that it will lead to huge losses. They have said that the out-turn ratio of this variety is less than 67 per cent —*PTI*

Tech Mahindra profit jumps to Rs 1,250 cr

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

IT services firm Tech Mahindra on Saturday reported a more than two-fold jump in its consolidated net profit to Rs 1,250 crore for the July-September quarter, driven by special income from the sale of assets.

The Mahindra Group company posted a net profit of Rs 493.9 crore in the year-ago period, according to an exchange filing.

Revenue rose by 3.49 per cent to Rs 13,313.2 crore in the second quarter of 2024-25 compared to Rs 12,863.9 crore in the same quarter of 2023-24. "Other income includes gain on sale of property of Rs 4,502 million which comprises of freehold land and its related buildings along with the furniture & fixtures sold for a consideration of Rs 5,350 million, receivable over a period of four years along with interest of 8.2 per cent p.a," the company filing said.

Net profit rose by 46.81 per cent and revenue by 2.36 per cent. The company's Total Contract Value, or net new deal wins, stood at USD 603 million in the second quarter. The Pune-headquartered firm added 6,653 employees during the quarter bringing the total staff count to 1,54,273. —*PTI*

Mahindra Group company had posted a net profit of Rs 493.9 crore in the year-ago period *PHOTO: X*

HDFC Bank Q2 profit rises up by 5%

New Delhi, 19 Oct

HDFC Bank on Saturday posted a marginal 5 per cent increase in its standalone profit at Rs 16,821 crore in the second quarter ended September 2024. The country's biggest private sector lender had earned a net profit of Rs 15,976 crore in the same quarter a year ago. Total income increased to Rs 85,500 crore during the quarter under review against Rs 78,406 crore in the same period last year, HDFC Bank said in a regulatory filing. The bank reported interest income of Rs 74,017 crore during the quarter compared to Rs 67,698 crore in the same period a year ago. Net Interest Income improved to Rs 30,110 crore, from Rs 27,390 crore from previous year, registering a 10 per cent growth. —*PTI*

Kotak Q2 profit rises 5% to ₹3,344 cr

New Delhi, 19 Oct

Kotak Mahindra Bank on Saturday posted a marginal 5 per cent increase in its standalone profit to Rs 3,344 crore in the second quarter ended in September 2024. The private sector lender had recorded a net profit of Rs 3,191 crore in the same quarter a year ago. The total income of the bank increased to Rs 15,900 crore during the quarter under review from Rs 13,507 crore in the same period last year, Kotak Mahindra Bank said in a regulatory filing. —*PTI*

Cos list 1.25 lakh opportunities under PM Internship Scheme

NE1W DELHI, 19 OCT

Companies have listed 1.25 lakh internship opportunities so far for candidates under the PM Internship Scheme, according to sources.

The dedicated portal for the scheme went live for registration by candidates at 5 pm on 12 October.

The sources in the know on Saturday said that so far 250 top companies have been registered under the scheme and 1.25 lakh internship offers have been made by companies.

The scheme's pilot project had envisaged providing 1.25 lakh internship opportunities to the candidates. The internships are set to commence on 2 December.

PHOTO: PEXELS

Those in the age group of 21-24 years are eligible to apply for the scheme, which is being implemented by the corporate affairs ministry through the portal 'www.pminternship.mca.gov.in'.

Under the scheme, an intern will get monthly financial assistance of Rs 5,000 for 12 months and a one-time grant of Rs 6,000.

The initial cost of the scheme's pilot project is estimated at Rs 800 crore.

Announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Union Budget 2024, the scheme aims to provide an opportunity to do an internship in the top 500 companies in India for 12 months. —*PTI*

LUXURY HOME SALES SURGE 37.8% PRICED AT ₹4 CRORE

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

The luxury housing market in India experienced a significant boom during the first nine months of 2024 with sales of high-end residential units (priced at Rs 4 crore and above) soaring by 37.8 per cent year-on-year, according to a CBRE report.

Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, and Hyderabad emerged as the top markets, accounting for nearly 90 per cent of total luxury home sales across the top seven cities in the country.

Approximately 12,630 luxury units were sold between January and September 2024, compared to 9,165 units in the same period last year.

The Delhi-NCR region led the surge with 5,855 units sold during the period, marking a remarkable 72 per cent increase from 3,410 units sold in the same timeframe in 2023, the report said.

Mumbai followed with sales of 3,820 luxury units, registering an 18 per cent growth, while Pune saw a significant rise with 810 units sold, compared to 330 in the previous year.

The luxury housing segment's growth is anticipated to persist, particularly in traditional mid-range markets such as Noida, Bengaluru, Pune, and Chennai, where there is a noticeable shift toward high-end developments, the report said.

In the third quarter of 2024, more than 68,400 residential units were sold, accompanied by over 62,000 new unit launches, with Mumbai, Pune, and Hyderabad accounting for 65 per cent of the total launches.

Mumbai maintained its market dominance, holding a 32 per cent share of sales, followed by Pune (18 per cent), Bengaluru (15 per cent), and Delhi-NCR (12 per cent). The surge in luxury home sales is largely driven by a shift in buyer preferences towards properties with enhanced amenities and spacious living areas that cater to the evolving lifestyles of affluent individuals. —*PTI*

KARVA CHAUTH IN FOCUS

Festivities to drive ₹22K cr economic boost

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

Deeply rooted in Indian culture and spirituality, the festival of Karva Chauth has grown into a significant economic event, with an estimated Rs 22,000 crore worth of business anticipated in markets nationwide.

The traditional festival will be celebrated across India on Sunday, marking a day of fasting and prayer for the well-being and longevity of spouses.

This year's spending is expected to surpass last year's Rs 15,000 crore mark, reflecting a surge in enthusiasm and consumer activity.

According to Member of Parliament Praveen Khandelwal, the festivities echo Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Vocal for Local" campaign, encouraging the use of domestically produced goods.

This year's spending is expected to surpass last year's Rs 15,000 crore mark *PHOTO: ANI*

Over the past week, markets across the country have witnessed a lively atmosphere, with bustling crowds shopping for clothing, jewellery, cosmetics, gift items, and puja essentials in preparation for the occasion.

Delhi, one of the central hubs for the festivities, is expected to contribute significantly to this economic boom, with sales projected to reach approximately Rs 4,000 crore.

The shopping spree spans a variety of items associated with Karva Chauth, including jewellery, traditional clothing, makeup products, sarees, and religious items like Karva pots, sieves, lamps, wicks, and prayer books.

Henna (mehendi) application, considered auspicious for the festival, has also seen a surge in popularity, with markets, temples, and public places filled with women lining up to get their hands decorated.

In Delhi, Connaught Place's Hanuman Temple has become a prominent spot where thousands gather for mehendi, while beauty parlours and private mehendi sessions are booked solid. Henna artists find a valuable opportunity to earn a livelihood during this period. Karva Chauth not only boosts retail activity but also sets the stage for the upcoming wedding season, with many shoppers placing orders for gold jewellery. —*ANI*

Festive season set to boost housing market

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

As the festive season approaches, India's housing market is set to experience a significant boost in demand, building on the strong sales momentum of 2023 and the first nine months of 2024, according to CBRE report.

Thisperiod is expected to attract first-time buyers who have previously hesitated, adding to the sector's growth prospects.

The positive homebuying sentiment has persisted throughout 2024, with over 150,000 units sold in the first half of the year, reflecting an increase over the same period in 2023.

Despite this upward trend, potential buyers are expected to proceed cautiously due to rising property prices and global economic uncertainties, carefully weighing current market dynamics before making decisions.

High-net-worth individuals and non-resident Indians remain key players, motivated by the opportunity for higher returns on investment amid a turbulent global economy.

In anticipation of increased demand, developers are rolling out enticing offers to lure prospective homebuyers.

These include EMI waivers, GST exemptions, and complimentary registration and stamp duty, along with additional perks like modular kitchens, electronics, free parking, and even furnished apartments. Some developers are collaborating with banks to offer fixed interest rate schemes for a set period, adding to the festive appeal and easing concerns over rising loan costs.. —*ANI*

India to host Asian Women's Handball Championship

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

India is set to host the 20th edition of the Asian Women's Handball Championship for the first time at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium from 1 to 10 December. The tournament was originally slated to be held in Almaty, Kazakhstan before unforeseen circumstances led to it being relocated. Apart from India, Iran, South Korea, China, Japan, Kazakhstan, Hong Kong, and Singapore are the other heavyweights competing in the tournament. "We are delighted to host the 20th Asian Women's Handball Championship in India. This event reflects our strong belief in India's potential as a vibrant sporting nation and a key player in the handball revolution," said Assistant Director Technical of the AHF, Abdullah Al-Theyab in a release on Saturday. —*PTI*

Richards, Gavaskar and Shaun join IML governing council

MUMBAI, 19 OCT

Legendary Vivian Richards, Sunil Gavaskar, and Shaun Pollock were on Saturday announced as the governing council members of the International Masters League tournament. The inaugural edition of the six-nation T20 tournament featuring former players including India legend Sachin Tendulkar and West Indies' Brian Lara will be held from 17 November to 8 December. "This trinity will oversee the strategic direction, rules, and operations of the IML, ensuring that the league remains a premier platform," the IML said in a release. The tournament will be held in three stages, from 17-20 November at Navi Mumbai's DY Patil Stadium, from 21-27 November at the Ekana Stadium in Lucknow, and from 28 November to 8 December at Raipur's Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh International Stadium. —*PTI*

PHOTO: @RAFAELNADAL

Tennis: Nadal to battle Djokovic one last time

DUBAI, 19 OCT

Rafael Nadal will have one last chance to face old rival Novak Djokovic before the Spaniard calls time on his illustrious career with the pair set to meet at the Six Kings Slam exhibition event in Saudi Arabia. World number one Sinner will meet Alcaraz in the final at Riyadh where the winner will take home $US6 million. "To have Novak in front of me, it's like a nostalgic thing," Nadal said. "We've played each other a lot, so it'll be fun to play each other again in this match."The 22-time Grand Slam champion, who announced his retirement last week, has faced Djokovic in 60 matches the most in men's tennis and has triumphed 29 times to the Serb's 31.—*AP*

LPGA: Hannah Green takes 2-stroke lead

PAJU, 19 OCT

Hannah Green completed her weather-delayed second round with an 8-under 64 on Saturday to take a two-stroke lead after 36 holes of the LPGA Tour's BMW Ladies Championship. Green was 4-under for her round Friday when rain washed out the remainder of play for the day. The Australian had a two-round total of 16-under 128 on the Seowon Valley Country Club course after also shooting a first-round 64. Ashleigh Buhai of South Africa finished her second round Saturday with a 66 and was in second place. Paris Olympic gold medalist Lydia Ko (66) and Jenny Shin (69) were tied for third, five strokes behind Green.—*PTI*

India fold up for 462, set NZ 107 to win on final day

NZ close in on Test win on Indian soil after 36 years

BENGALURU, 19 OCT

Sarfaraz Khan's maiden century and Rishabh Pant's cavalier 99 is unlikely to prevent New Zealand from earning their first-ever Test match victory on Indian soil in 36 years with only 107 runs to get on the final day of an intriguing start-stop series opener.

Tom Latham (0) and Devon Conway (0) were at the crease when bad light and later rain forced early stumps on the fourth evening.

The last time New Zealand won a Test match in India was way back in 1989 when Sir Richard Hadlee was still an active Test cricketer and got 10 wickets at the Wankhede to ensure a huge 136-run win.

Tom Latham's team is on the cusp of history despite a gallant fightback from India to score 462 in their second innings largely due to Sarfaraz continuing his happy knack of notching up 'Daddy Hundreds' from first-class to the Test arena with a brilliant 150 off 195 balls and a stand of 177 with a half-fit Rishabh Pant, who missed his seventh Test hundred by a solitary run.

Once the second new ball was taken, India lost seven wickets for 54 runs with tall fast bowlers Matt Henry and William O'Rourke getting extra bounce and movement off the Chinnaswamy surface. After all, India was 52 runs ahead with seven wickets in hand. But Latham taking the new ball on the first available opportunity turned the tide in New Zealand's favor.

At that point, hopes were high of a miracle triumph similar to Kolkata 2001 with both Sarfaraz and Pant at the crease.

The first one to perish was Sarfaraz, who spooned Tim Southee to Ajaz Patel at covers and Pant followed soon, dragging William O'Rourke (3/92) onto his stumps.

It was his seventh dismissal in the '90s in Test cricket, and he will certainly rue it after doing all the hard work till then.

Sarfaraz Khan's maiden century

New Zealand's bowler William O'Rourke celebrates the wicket of India's batter Rishabh Pant PHOTO: PTI

Henry (3/102), who took five wickets in the first innings, looked pedestrian till then regained his mojo and movement with the new ball, and mopped India's tail with the wickets of Ravichandran Ashwin, Mohammed Siraj, and Jasprit Bumrah.

But before the Blackcaps' bowlers found some wind in their sails, Sarfaraz and Pant dictated the course of the match like puppet masters.

The sight of Pant walking out to bat in the first session in itself was soothing as he had missed the whole of the third day because of the blow he copped on the knee while 'keeping.

Pant understandably made a slightly gingerly start and was even involved in a mix-up with Sarfaraz, saved only by an erratic throw at stumps by wicketkeeper Tom Blundell.

Once swam past that period, Pant was unstoppable, clobbering left-arm spinner Ajaz Patel for a couple of six.

The left-hander soon brought up his fifty off just 55 balls with a thumping cover drive off Glenn Phillips before rain halted his march.

Despite the break, Pant started the middle session with confidence, biffing left-arm spinner Rachin Ravindra for a couple of sixes over the covers.

Brief scores: India 46 & 462 in 99.3 overs (Rohit Sharma 52, Virat Kohli 70, Sarfaraz Khan 150, Rishabh Pant 99; Ajaz Patel 2/100, William O'Rourke 3/92, Matt Henry 3/102) vs New Zealand 402 & 0/0 in 0.4 overs. —*PTI*

WOMEN'S T20 WC

New Zealand's players celebrate after winning against WI PHOTO: PTI

NZ and SA eye first title in summit clash

DUBAI, 19 OCT

New Zealand's golden generation, led by inspirational Sophie Devine, will have one last chance to lay hands on a global ICC trophy when it meets a gritty South Africa in the summit clash of the T20 World Cup which is set to throw a new champion, here Sunday.

New Zealand's women's team had won the ODI World Cup back in 2000 but none of the current squad members were part of that historic title triumph.

Before this event began, New Zealand was in the trenches having lost 10 matches on the trot in the format but under Devine this bunch, comprising of the venerable Suzie Bates and the assuring Amelia Kerr, has done wonders, bringing the side in contention for the ultimate prize.

It is most probably the last time the Black Shirts will have Devine, Bates, and Lea Tahuhu playing on the national side in a global tournament.

Devine, 35, has more than 7000 runs under her belt in white-ball formats while the 37-year-old Bates has more than 10,000 runs to her name.

Pacer Tahuhu, 34, has 112 wickets in ODIs and 93 in T20Is.

They won't leave any stone unturned to ensure that they have a World Cup trophy in their cabinet.

South Africa on the other side will be equally determined to complete the unfinished business as they had lost the 2023 World Cup final to Australia at home. They have an opportunity to erase painful memories as they had lost by a mere 19 runs in the close contest. Match starts @ 7:30 PM IST. —*PTI*

Bhullar close to record 12th win in Bangkok

BANGKOK, 19 OCT

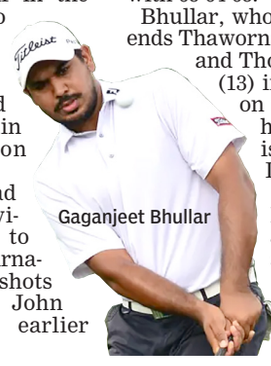
Gaganjeet Bhullar, who won his last title 11 months ago to the day, put himself in the perfect position to pick up his 12th Asian Tour win as he fired a bogey-free 66 in the third round at the Black Mountain Championship on Saturday.

Bhullar, who had 65-66 in the two previous rounds, got to 19-under for the tournament and is two shots clear of American John Catlin (65), whose earlier rounds were 69-65.

Catlin, the Order of Merit leader, was 17-under, while fellow American Michael Maguire was third at 16-under with 68-64-68.

Bhullar, who trails Thai legends Thaworn Wiratchant (18) and Thonghchai Jaidee (13) in terms of wins on the Asian Tour, has 11 wins and is also the top Indian.

The next best Indians are Jyoti Randhawa and Arjun Atwal, with eight wins each. —*PTI*



Gaganjeet Bhullar

RANJI TROPHY

Chahar tears into Himachal's batting order

DHARAMSALA, 19 OCT

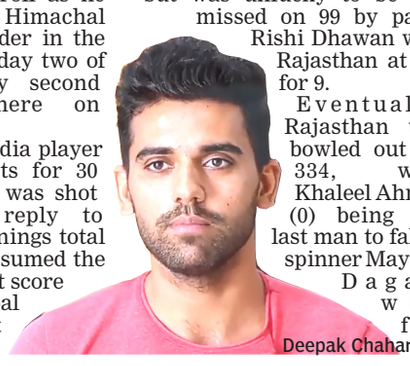
Rajasthan seamer Deepak Chahar was on a roll as he ripped apart the Himachal Pradesh batting order in the second innings on day two of the Ranji Trophy second round match here on Saturday.

The 32-year-old India player bagged five wickets for 30 runs, as Himachal was shot out for 98 in reply to Rajasthan's first-innings total of 334. Rajasthan resumed the day at the overnight score of 304/7, with Mahipal Lomror and Arafat Khan at the crease.

Lomror was just 11 runs away from his seventh First-Class hundred at the start of the day but was unlucky to be dismissed on 99 by pacer Rishi Dhawan with Rajasthan at 323 for 9.

Eventually, Rajasthan was bowled out for 334, with Khaleel Ahmed (0) being the last man to fall to spinner Mayank Dagar, who finished with figures of 5/85.

Himachal had an inauspicious start to their first innings, losing the top-four batters in single digits -- Shubham Arora (6), Prashant Chopra (4), Ankit Kalsi (6) and Ekant Sen (0) -- with the scoreboard reading 19/4. At 51/7, skipper Dhawan managed to stitch a 40-run stand with Arpit Guleria (17) before the latter fell to Aniket Choudhary. Dhawan and Co were eventually out for 98, with the captain remaining unbeaten on 40. Abhinandan Bhardwaj (10) was the only other player to score in double figures. —*PTI*



Deepak Chahar

Iyer's ton lifts Mumbai

India batter Shreyas Iyer, who has been out of favor in Tests, scored his first First-Class century in three years during Mumbai's second-round Ranji Trophy clash against Maharashtra on Saturday. Iyer came in to bat at number five after Mumbai lost their captain Rahane early. Gaikwad hit an unbeaten 80 to lead a strong reply for Maharashtra but they were still trailing by 173 runs in their Group A Ranji Trophy match against Mumbai, here on Saturday. Maharashtra reached 142 for one in their second innings at the end of the second day. Sachin was batting on 59 (7x4s, 1x6s) giving company to Gaikwad at the end of the day. The defending champions Mumbai had taken a massive lead of 315 runs as they posted 441 in the first innings after dismissing Mumbai for a mere 126. Mumbai, who resumed their first innings at 220 for three, were bolstered by a robust 176 from their 17-year-old opener Ayush who struck a ton in only his third first-class match.

Sultan of Johor Cup: India junior men's team defeats Japan 4-2

JOHOR, 19 OCT

Indian Junior Men's Hockey Team made an impressive start to their campaign here at the Sultan of Johor Cup on Saturday with a stunning 4-2 win against Japan.

Goals were scored by Amir Ali (12'), Gurjot Singh (36'), Anand Sourabh Kushwaha (44'), and Ankit Pal (47') in India's win while Tsubasa Tanaka (26') and Rakusei Yamanaka (57') scored for Japan.

India's opening game win was welcomed with a big smile by legendary former India goalkeeper PR Sreejesh, who begins his new innings in hockey as Coach of the Indian Junior Men's Team.

Indian team in action against Japan PHOTO: X/@THEHOCKEYINDIA

They punctured the Japanese defence when Amir Ali scored a fine field goal in the 12th minute of the match. Japan bounced back from this early setback when Tsubasa Tanaka scored in the 26th minute to equalize.

This equalizer didn't dent India's spirit as they stopped Japan from taking a 2-1 lead when Neo Sato and Yuto Higuchi worked in tandem to set up a fine shot on goal, thanks to India goalie Ali Khan who was impressive in the goalpost to make a fine save. —*PTI*

Son clipped the foot of the post one minute later, and West Ham's miserable outing was capped when Kudus saw red for violent conduct. PHOTO: X

Son scores for Spurs

LONDON, 19 OCT

Tottenham scored three goals in eight minutes in a 4-1 win over West Ham in the Premier League on Saturday.

Spurs had trailed to Mohammed Kudus' 18th-minute goal at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium but powered back with a brilliant second-half performance.

Dejan Kulusevski leveled the game in the 36th and after the break the home team took control. Yves Bissouma struck in the 52nd before and Alphonse Areola scored his own goal three minutes later.Son Heung-min added a fourth in the hour mark.

West Ham was reduced to 10 men in the 86th when Kudus was sent off for pushing Micky van de Ven in an angry confrontation. —*PTI*

Canadian Pendrith leads at weather-hit Shriners Open

LAS VEGAS, 19 OCT

Canadian Taylor Pendrith who had a 10-under 61 on the first day only had to play six holes and stayed in the lead before the second round was halted by darkness at the Shriners Children's Open.

He escaped the strong winds that hit during the day caused a four-hour delay and battered the field.Penrith now faces a long third day 12 holes to complete the second round and however many holes in the third round as the autumn light allows.

He remained at 10-under four pars, a birdie, and a bogey in his short day of work and led by one shot over Filipino Rico Hoey, who made a 15-foot eagle putt on his seventh and final hole.

Las Vegas resident Kurt Kitayama, who had 66 on the first day, was bogey-free for a 68 in the second despite gusts approaching 40 mph and low temperatures that led to players wearing sweaters and ski caps.Kitayama was part of the group at 8-under 134 that included Doug Ghim, J.J. Spaun, and Davis Thompson, all of whom completed the second round.

It took Ghim eight holes before he made his first par, and he wound up with a hard-earned 70.The start of Friday was delayed four hours when gusts approaching 50 mph made it difficult to play and caused enough safety concerns that PGA Tour officials decided to keep spectators away from the TPC. —*PTI*

Taylor Pendrith

CURRENT GENERATION

There is no passion in gymnasts: Dipa

NEW DELHI, 19 OCT

Just-retired Indian gymnastics star Dipa Karmakar believes most of the current generation of gymnasts lack passion and urged them to embrace the sport with fervor to excel on the global stage.

Dipa, who blazed a trail by becoming the first Indian woman gymnast to compete at the Olympics and finish a historic fourth in the 2016 Rio Games, retired earlier this month, ending a career in which she inspired awe for routinely performing the highly-difficult Produnova vault.

"There was junoon (passion) in Dipa, that is why. Same for Pranati," she said when asked why there is only one Dipa or Pranati Nayak among Indian women gymnasts winning medals on the international stage.

"I can't see this Junoon (passion) much in the current generation (of gymnasts). I feel they look for short-term, instant success," she said on Friday night during a panel discussion at an event titled 'Beyond the Finish Line', organized by Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon.

The diminutive 31-year-old from Tripura grabbed headlines with her fourth-place finish in the vault final of the 2016 Rio Games, losing an Olympic medal by just 0.15 points.

Hailing from Agartala, Dipa is one of only five women in gymnastics history to have successfully executed the Produnova, which involves two somersaults before landing and is called the 'vault of death' owing to the high risk of injury it poses.

She felt that the problems plaguing the national federation for some time have also not helped the cause of Indian gymnastics.

"There was a problem between the SAI and the federation. For example, the selection criteria for the last Asian Games (2023) were known only after the actual trials.

"I want to bring changes in Indian gymnastics so that this kind of problem does not happen in the future, but I can't do this alone," she said when asked about his plans.

While announcing her retirement, Dipa had said that she would give back to the sport by becoming a coach at some point in her life or she might simply remain a "supporter of the next generation of gymnasts following their dreams".

Asked why she decided to retire, she said, "I had two ACL surgeries, shoulder and ankle injury. I was not being able to do my main event of vault the way I wanted. If the body is not allowed to push, there is no point in continuing."

When she started the sport in her home state, people would tell her why a woman should do gymnastics. —*PTI*

Dipa Karmakar